

The Beat Within



THE BEAT WITHIN • A WEEKLY PUBLICATION OF WRITING AND ART FROM THE PEOPLE • ISSUE 14.08

2-Pac



Hello to all our writers, readers, poets artists and truthspeakers. As the economy gets worse and the weather gets better, The Beat is here once again to represent the voices of the system. This week's Editor's Note comes from one of our newest employees. Some of you may know him as Chris, or as Cree, which is how he signed his name for the year he was writing Beat pieces from lockdown in 150. Now he's an adult - 18 years old, living on his own, and working in our office typing up units, writing responses, and helping bring you this publication each week.

His words here are straight from the heart. He's not a social worker, a do-gooder, a lifer full of regrets or a system employee... he's been where you are, and now he's in a new place entirely. We had to edit down his language to make it Beat appropriate, just like we do with all of you, but we hope that doesn't soften his message.

Don't Be A Dumb Mutha!
Sitting in a cell for a period of time will let you realize things and make you look at your life in a way that you never have before. When you have your freedom stripped from you, it makes you think of what you'll do to regain that freedom.

But what most don't do is follow through with what they say they are going to change in their lives.

Then they back talking bout "damn ninja you should've seen this lick we hit"... For what? You locked up and you hit that lick for nothing. Talkin' 'bout y'all got racks waitin' for you on the outs when you know damn well y'all broke. I'm sure someone right now is sayin' "That ninja trippin'. I'm a goon, I got money". Stop Lyin!

That's the problem, everyone wants to have what the next man doesn't. Greed will get us locked up or it can even get us killed. When you get out, follow through with what you say you are going to do to make positive changes in your life. It be hellu hard but in the long run it's worth it. Now a good majority of y'all are going to get out and decide it's easier to go make that fast money. Good luck with that. Holla at me when you in Rita or the pen. Because most of you will be 18 soon or already are and will be facing that adult time.

Go get a job and get back into school. I know you hear it over and over again. Every staff be up in there saying the same "shhh."

But I be typing up the pieces for The Beat now one month, and a writer will write, "I'm getting out tomorrow and I plan on changing my life going back to school..." But a month later the same kid is back writing about how he screwed up once again.

So what you going to do differently? Because I'm telling you, that BS don't work.

We in a recession, how you be on the block hustlin' when ninjas don't got the money to support your hustle? Go get yourself a job and enroll in school. It sounds bootsy, but it feels good when you go cash your paycheck in and know it's legal money that the police can't take it from you. Work and school takes up a lot of your time, and after a while the funk an' all that BS don't even seem important anymore. Besides you don't even have the time for the dumb shhh anymore.

Most you probably thinking, "Damn, this square-ass ninja..." But to be honest, it's a whole lot less stressful when you ain't fillin' your life up with that BS. I'm not saying change your whole being. I haven't changed, ain't none of you can see me on some funk, but regardless I'm not concerned with all that. So all I'm saying is at least try to do something positive with yourself,

at least TRY and see what happens. You never know until you try...

Thank you Chris Tamaru for stepping up with this piece, and thank you for all you give The Beat at this time. We appreciate the love and respect you have for this program and for yourself.

On another note, today we received a poem from an old, old friend, whom we first met in San Francisco's juvenile hall. From juvenile placement, he became one of our earliest Beat employees, Lance Bon. Sadly, Lance is writing us from a correctional facility in Washington State. Back in the day, Lance typed, edited and lead Beat workshops in San Francisco, Santa Cruz, Alameda and Santa Clara County — that is until drugs and the lure of the streets got the best of him. We can only hope this is his wake up call, given he has a family that loves him and needs him home doing well. With that said, here's Lance's first contribution in years...

"Hunting Illusions"
The brave hunters of Illusion
Dying at the hands of misconception

Whole-heartedly embracing ignorance
With such conviction and blind fury
That we suffocate the possibility of
Sweetness while it's still sour

We must hate ourselves too much
To smile with kindness
For the sake of purity

We smile at the death
And celebrate greed

Just as a starving fish swims
Anxiously to the delicious worm
On the poachers hook

We are the hunters of illusion
Who bite hard with our blind hunger at
Whatever bait is before our desperate
Misfortune

Hollow souls who appear so solid
Victims of running too much game
The art of fooling the foolish
With our specialized foolishness

Wasting potential worshiping destruction
Too scared to live
Masters of a self-polished shine

Shining... laughing... killing...
Clinging to instant gratification with big
Grins and lost eyes

So confused with confusion
So alive with partial truth

Laughing at kindness and Gods
Sincere simplicity, smiling with
Hate in our foolish eyes

The hunters of illusion
Ignorance so bright
That our death outshines our life

Gods riding shotgun crying
As we embrace Satan with big
Greedy smiles selling instantly
And perversion to the possibility
Of purity

Dancing to the forbidden
Rhythms of fears hypnotic obsession
Dancing...
With fake love in our lost eyes
That don't believe in tears
But celebrate judgment

Dancing...dancing...
With big smiles... dancing with the death of
Our mothers and the loss of our
Children
With numb hearts and big greedy eyes

Hunters of illusion
Who shine so bright we cannot see
Ourselves through the glare of our Malfunction

In such a hurry to smoke
That lie that we die gasping
For the fresh breath of patience

We scare ourselves in bravery preparing
For a war with no meaning

We live for death, but
Refuse to die for life
Just as long as we look good in the
Shallow eyes of venomous friends while
We do it

So loud and full of fake pride
Busy with paranoid confusion
That we forget to be still, shut our
Arrogant mouths and receive the
Solution!!

With all this in mind, lets get to the topics... First topic, "Bringing back the dead" - If you could go back in time, knowing what you know today, and prevent that one death from happening (a brother or homie from violence, or a beloved family member from old age or illness) would your life be different? Would you still be here? Why or why not? Who is this person? What would you be able to tell this person that you never told them when they were alive? What would you want them to tell you that they never had the chance to say?

Our second topic, "What money can't fix"- We always read about chasing that paper, stacking your chips, getting your "chedda." But are there things that money can't fix? Like what? Even if you had all the money you thought you wanted or needed, would there still be things that aren't working for you, that some other remedy is needed to fix? Tell The Beat some of the things that you believe money can't fix. Are some of these things part of your life, and if so, how are you planning to overcome them and put them behind you?

Third topic, "If you were your parent"- At times, all of us get angry with our parents. But parenting is a hard job. So if you were your own parent, what would you do that's different? How would you be a different kind of parent? Or, if you think your parent is doing just the right thing now, what makes that the right way? As your own parent, how would you deal with the person you are today to keep yourself safe and put you on the right path?

Fourth topic, "Just before I went to sleep last night, I thought about..."

Ok Beat readers, this issue goes out to those in recovery and to those taking the steps in that direction...

Editor's Note 2

Farmington, New Mexico 4

Pieces Of The Week 8

Co-Pieces Of The Week 12

Standouts 19

Alameda 19
San Francisco 25
Santa Clara 32
Santa Cruz 40
New Mexico 42
Marin 43
Fresno 44
Solano 55
Voices In Spanish 57

The Beat Without 60



The Beat Within, a weekly newsletter of writing and art by incarcerated youth, is published by Pacific News Service.

At The Beat Within, we go through a lot of trouble to censor inappropriate sexual remarks, foul language, and gang references. There is an augh tension in our communities already—we don't aim to bolster it. It is in The Beat's interest to promote peace and unity. Our goal is to educate one another.

The Beat Within publishes the opinions and views expressed by the participants in our workshops. This is simply the pure voice of the youth. The views you read do not necessarily reflect those of the publisher, editor or staff. All rights are reserved. Nothing from this publication can be reproduced without our written permission.

To our writers: What you write could be hazardous to you. Your words have consequences, and could be used to incriminate you. Try to illuminate your feelings and viewpoints without running the risk of providing ammunition for those who might use your words against you.

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www.thebeatwithin.org

A Brutally Honest Appraisal

Family....when it really comes down to it are they there for you through thick and thin? Well I can answer that for you. It all depends on who you are and where your parents came from. My mother is a homeless alcoholic that deserted me when I was six years old and my father left when he found out my mother was pregnant with me.

My family is not there for me through the hard times.... Not even through the easy times. I am sixteen years old now and I have been raising myself and living on the streets since I was six. I don't really know my family and they don't really know me, so if I were to ask them what they honestly thought about me, it would not be nice at all.

If I were to ever ask my family about what were my faults in the past they would not be able to tell you anything that is true because they were never around to witness anything bad I've ever done. My whole family thinks I will end up in prison or even worse, which is dead somewhere. Through all the lonely years they would never let me visit them because if I went up to them they would call the police on me. I don't know why. I do not let them bring me down.

It's funny how people think your family knows the real you. My family would love to get asked that question about me so they can call me bad things and bring me down. Although I go through hard times with no family to help me at all I just keep my head up. I may cry every now and then but I try not to because I know that will not do anything. As I go through life with no one helping me and everyone looking down on me, I take it. I take it because I know they don't know me, the only two people who do know me are my girlfriend Kaylene and myself. I know I have strength and determination to go on and prove them all wrong.

From my life experiences I learned not to judge people from what I see and learn to judge them when I know enough about them. I've learned to not take things for granted, and life is very unfair, All I'm saying is as long as you know who you are, you can never be destroyed as an individual.

-Ellwood

The Way Things Are

I'm sorry mama,
For putting you through all this drama,
I know that you can't seem to depend on anyone or to rely,
Man does it hurt me to see you cry,
Don't you ever forget that I love you,
Because my love for you is oh so true,
Hugging on you from my jail cell,
The life in here is hell,
Wishing to see your Beautiful smile,
Something about it makes me want to go wild,
Don't worry I'm only gone for a little while,
You tried so hard,
I remember you crying when I got my report card,
I wish you could turn back the hands of time,
To where I never even committed this crime,
It feels good busting this rhyme,
I hate being in this empty place,
I need your love,
And from up above,
His smile and Grace,
THE WAY THINGS ARE!

-Shaina

From The Beat: About a year ago The Beat Within visited the Juvenile Detention Center in Farmington, New Mexico. Farmington is, correct us if we are wrong, about three hours outside Albuquerque. Since our visit, we stayed in email contact and continued to share our topics with schoolteacher Mrs. S-L, and last week we were thrilled to receive the following pieces from our friends in Farmington. We believe this is only the first of many more to come...

My Intro

In trying to teach my kids "The writing process" in order to pass high school competency tests, I was thankful for "The Beat Within" topics. These are real topics that my students can relate to, not just boring test prompt topics. I especially liked what David had said when he spoke to my class, "you can freestyle or let your soul bleed."

In educational jargon this would be called "brainstorming" or "prewriting." Because this is a classroom setting and I am their English teacher, the only rule was "no innapropriate language."

I explained to them that when they need to express themselves in the real world outside of the juvenile detention center, they can do so without profanity, and more people will listen to them. My students were OK with this. They let their souls bleed and talked with their hearts. I am proud of them and their writing abilities.

- Mrs. S-L

I feel bad because I allowed him to get alcohol poisoning when he was thirteen years old.

Bad Influences

I have always had a negative influence on my life growing up with my older sister. I always thought the people we hung out with were al that but they really weren't. Now that I am older I realized what kind of bad things I have done, like lead my younger cousin to things I did, like drugs and alcohol. My younger cousin use to hang out with me every day he idolized me. He wanted to do everything I did and hang out with the people I did. I was a major influence on him.

Now he's a little older he 's making his own decisions that aren't that smart. He is now drinking an getting high just about everyday. I feel bad because I allowed him to get alcohol poisoning when he was thirteen years old. It makes me realize how I have affected his life. When he was younger he was a good kid,, he would probably still be that way if he didn't do the things I did. Now and then I talk to him and tell him to stay out of trouble but he doesn't listen to anybody anymore but himself. He 's no longer a little kid. He knows what he wants now and that's not going to change. I wish I could have been a better influence on him, he's now on the road I am.

I don't think bad influences on others are cool because I realize what kind of influence I was, and what kind of influences I had. I worry about my cousin sometimes and hope he never comes where I am at right now. I hope he sets better examples for his younger friends so they 're not headed in the wrong direction.

I hope my cousin doesn't keep the bad habits that he does drinking and smoking. Someday he will. For right now, I have, because I am trying to start a better life without all the bad. I probably would not be here if I did not have bad influences. I hope my cousin will change and be a good influence on others.

-Gary

My Concerns

As I concentrate within myself about my family's worries regarding me, I imagine many things. I think about all my strengths. I look back at all my faults. Then the question hits me. What does my family say about me? Is it good or bad things?

I consider my strengths within my thoughts. I realize that one is my family. They help me understand myself, understanding I have to implicate them, too. My working abilities are quite different though. I observe everyone around me watching how they make a mistake, making sure I don't do as they have.

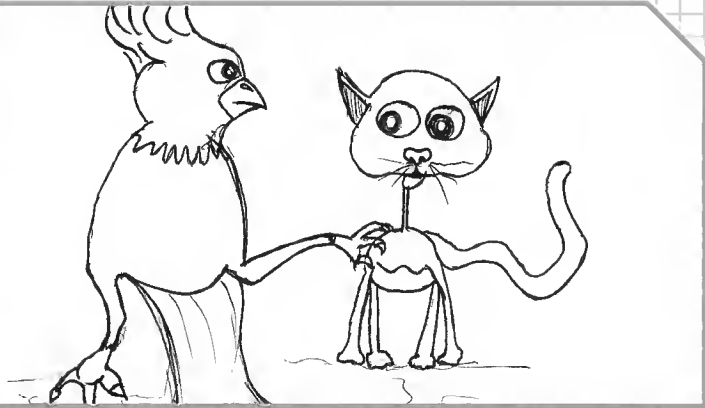
Then my faults approach my train of thoughts. I've been in trouble with authority figures since I was about seven. Now, I am seventeen, still in trouble, and incarcerated, taking steps into recovery, realizing, that I've been punishing my family and friends for years. Although they've all been hurt by me, they still cling to my side.

Also, the thought comes to mind, again. What does my family and friends say about me? I know they would say loving things. Good or bad, it doesn't matter to me. They've been there for me throughout the roughest times.

Settling all my regards about myself, I observe the strengths that I have endured to write this. I do not dwell on my faults, instead, I learn from them. Then I ease the thought, what would they say about me? Out of my mentality, knowing it doesn't matter what they say, I still care for them as they care for me.

Sincerely...

-Jeronimo



Momma Stay Strong

You haven't always been there for me mom, but mom stay strong even if I'm not around. I know you get unhappy when I'm not there, sometimes I wish I could go back in time and show you that I care.

Mom I hope you know that I care, I didn't say that before, but know cause im in here. My eyes cry, cause I'm in a cell mom stay strong I'm gonna get out.

As soon as I get out I'm gonna watch the kids, have some laughs go to school, and be in business. You've always told me the good from the bad. Mom I promise I'm gonna quit all those things in the past.

I promise I'm gonna be there for you even if your gone. But like I said mom stay stay strong, put them tears away, I hate to see you cry no more of that mom everything's gonna be ok.

-Dominique

The Way I Felt On And Off Drugs

Because of the way I felt when I was on drugs I always wanted to get in trouble with the law. I was put on probation, kicked out of school, and always in and out of jail. I was always talking to law enforcement, and was put in many treatment centers. I was taken away from my family for two and a half years. The way I was feeling at the time was lonely, sad, and scared to never see my family again.

I felt stupid not being sober, red eyes, always hungry. I had a bad attitude towards everybody and worried about finding eye drops for my eyes to take the redness away. It also made me look bad in front of everybody, and I had a bad reputation. I always had to argue with every person that was around me.

I felt that I would have no life and education. I also thought I wouldn't be able to accomplish anything in life. I also said I would never stop doing drugs, drugs were good for you. Sure enough I snapped . I was in the wrong about all my actions.

The time came when I finished using drugs, and was clean and sober. I felt that I didn't have to be so angry with every one . I didn't have to yell at any one anymore. I did not have to take everything out on any one, and I didn't break anything around the house. I did not have to be so mean with my dirty looks. I also did not have a bad attitude towards everyone.

I didn't have to worry about getting in trouble, like being on probation, and having someone to tell me what to do all the time. I did not have to sit in jail waiting for court, and go to treatment for drugs . I didn't have to deal with attorneys, and police.

It was good to be an athlete with a school team for the junior varsity and varsity volleyball team. I also didn't have to worry about getting caught by the school coaches, and security. I did not have to fail a drug test when they asked for one. It made me feel really good to feel involved with a school, and getting along with everyone. I had a good reputation with the law in Albuquerque, New Mexico.

It made my family members and I feel really good that I had nothing to worry about. Like hiding my drugs from my family members. I did not have to worry about getting caught in all kinds of lies, about the drugs on me or it's way. I felt that I was always worried about getting caught by my parents breaking out with my old friends that just wanted to get me in trouble. They were not really my friends to start out with. They are there to hurt you instead of helping you out. I also felt that I did not want to lose my family's trust about doing drugs. Usually when you are using, and abusing drugs , people think that you will never stop and you might commit suicide. That's the way I felt when I stopped doing drugs. I wanted to thank God for setting me free from drugs.

-Leticia

My Life

I grew up poor
Momma always had me watching the door
My only friend was a rock
It was the only thing to which I could talk
I was so alone
Mom loved me but it was never shown
Soon I became like leather
All because we never spent time together
She was always high
And never had the heart to tell me goodbye

-Creighton

Locked up

Behind these bars,
Wishing to look up at the stars,
I feel like nobody can hear my cry,
I can't even depend on anyone or on who to rely,
But deep down your crying in the night,
I hope to see the light,
Hope to see my knight,
Man don't you wish you could fly,
But all you can do is cry,
I need your love and from up above,
His smile,
Man forget this jail style,
I need your support,
But instead my PO got my report,
I miss my brother and my mother,
Being in here is just like oh brother!!

-Shaina

I Wanna Do For You

I write letters to you just to make you smile,
I wish to see you, but don't know how,
Life is crazy, but we can change,
I'll change my life just to be with you,
might sound crazy, but I have feelings too,
I gotta list of what I wanna do for you,
I wanna hold you in my arms just to show you I care,
I'll make a fire if you tell me you're cold,
I'll sleep next to you, if you said you couldn't sleep,
I wanna make you happy, don't wanna see you cry,
don't matter how far you are, I'll walk for miles,
I'll rub your tummy if you tell me it aches,
I'll carry you if you can't walk, I'll give you a hot bath to make you relax,
I'll be honest to you, wouldn't tell you a lie,
I'll take and have responsibilities if you was by my side,
we haven't seen each other , but one day we will,
I ain't the type of guy that would make you beg or cry,
If you wish to be with me, all you have to do is close your eyes,
and the reason why, I wrote you this poem trying to make sense,
is because you said "you'll give us a chance",

- Orlando

The Value of one life

Are some peoples life's worth more or less than other people's lives? I think that everyone's life is equally important. From the homeless lady or man to the richest woman or man. Also, I believe that every person of every race is equally worth the same.

Is my life worth more than anyone else's? To me my life is important. But I believe that everyone's life is equally important. We are all human and we all have reason to live.

The statistics are important in the research poses. From 2006 (132 people) to 2007 (162 People) the number of murders in New Mexico increased by 30 people. Why do you think one murder leads to so much community anger, wile so many others produce nothing more than a number to a list in the end of the year statistics in a newspaper or TV news report? I can't believe how the value of another human's life is so little now a day.

I lost a homie to murder. I was locked up when he died. He was only 15 when he died. His name was Desman Hancock. So what do you think the value of one life is? All are valuable. RIP Desman Hancock!

- William

Bad Influences

I've been a bad influence to my sister and my new friends. Reason why because I grew up with a lot of drinking and bud smoking until I got little older, as I got older things got worst. From buying beer to stealing it, coming home with an un open 750 ml Bacardi superior giving my sister some while she was working. Thought I was cool because everyone I knew, knew that I stole fifths left and right to get the party started. Got involved into a gang and people I hung out with were like me, they didn't care what they done or what would happen to them. I had money, selling drugs, getting girls. Every youngster I knew were becoming like me it was cool at first, getting into fights. Taught the youngster's to be strong and let no one bring you down or disrespect your living styles.

I remember I was a good kid getting good grades even I was living with a lot of drinking and weed. Than I got to sixth grade, drugs and alcohol was all around at home and school so I tried it and I liked both the substance. After that I did it everyday, spending most of my money. After spending a lot of my money on it I finally saved couple more bucks and bought a oz of weed and started slanging. As I was making money I also was meeting a lot of people. As I was involved into the gang I was wearing the same color, doing a lot more criminal acts being more a menace to the community, ended up in jail on probation but it still won't change for me. I just wanted the fame listing to rap soaking their words up like a sponge.

When my friends, cousins and I were kicking back 20th street on Lee Ave and Cliffside we were smoking a joint, with a fifth in my pocket. Saw a group of kids walking towards us so I said to the bros, see what is up with this punks, as I went to them I said "what it do fool where you from" they said they barley moved in so. I thought if they on our turf mine as well be their bros so I pulled out the fifth and said take a slam, they did. I rolled another joint and passed it to the right. We got blazed and buzz and we got all of them down with the crew.

I've been doing this for a long time now and I did it for so long that all the things I did. I finally got caught and the consequences, was jail time and probation my friends ended up the same right here in J-2 with me. My family was mad at me for what I've done and how much pain I put them through. All the work I made them do to put me in treatment and getting me out of jail, going to my court dates, taking me to counseling but those were my consequences I have to live with.

- McNeil

What I've Wanted To Do

Hello, my name is Benjamin Y., and what I've wanted to do is keep myself in school and finish my high school then get my GED from Kirtland high school. I want to graduate from KCHS because most of my family members went to school there until they graduate so I just want to get my GED there. Then after getting my GED I want to go on to college find a good job where I could support my family.

The good job I want to do after getting my GED is somewhere where they can pay more so I could buy the stuff I want and pay for my college myself. I want to work for an electric company because my uncle I live with has been working for an electric company for a long time an he has told me that its good to work where he works because he also told me that they pay good money there so I just been thinking I want to make good money like him.

I also want to prove other people wrong. That I can stay in school and stay until I get to college and find a really good job like my uncle to support my family and pay for my college.

- Benjamin

My Life Story

Yeah, my speech may not go with The Beat,
I just wanna give you all a sneak peek,
my life story, my life of majority, I hope you all understand,
but I faced it,
I took time to place it, what can I do, my rap ain't making paper green,
my poetry ain't making the life of my dreams,
say, what you do if you didn't have a chance to choose?
To be free, or to be whatever you wanted to be,
I ought to say, it's been hard on me dealing with so much stress,
so much thinking of death, I'm an innocent man, I've served my time,
but my whole commitment I was dying inside,
nobody gave me a sign, my homeboy's never dropped off a nickel or dime,
I never had the chance to see my grandpa when he died,
my parole officer never gave me the chance to say good-bye,
I felt stupid, my tears are now full of regret, and now my grandpa under dirt
without my last seen, now my cousin gone, we never got along,
I wished we did, but time goes on, clock never stops,
our hearts keep on beating until our body drops,
I'm telling you life is a waste when putting yourself in a place,
think about it, you don't have to listen to my advice,
but at least think twice before taking yours or someone else's life,
or committing crimes, 'cause all you going to face is just time,
you see I never thought whether my life was in danger, whether
I was a stranger, growing up in facilities,
knowing I'll be facing my own realities,
I never thought I'd change, I always thought life was going to be the same,
being in gangs, hurting the people I thought was my enemy,
disrespecting the person that invented me,
I didn't care whether people looked at me,
as a teenager I was a joke, don't think of me as a punk,
'cause once you grow out of that mentality,
you'll understand more of your actual life, respect me or not,
all I'm trying to say is that one life is all we got,
be something, make your dreams come true,
think in your minds of what you wanna do,
'cause my life was the wrong path to follow,
but I've prayed to have better days every tomorrow,
I've always wondered who would save me,
besides the evil spirit that raised me,
thinking so much in my mind, always stopping, wanting to rewind,
I wish I could, but I've already wasted precious time,
to the people that read or hear this, I wish you better days,
better lives, and clear minds.
Well, I hope you all really believe this is the truth, s
o please don't ever put yourself in my position,
'cause a harsh life and time is all you ever gone go through,
but just keep in mind that you don't have to follow my advice,
but hopefully you all understand
that I want everybody to make it through life,

-Orlando

*I know now that I could make my
parents even more proud of me if
I stay out of a place like this. I de-
cided one way to conquer a goal in
life is to stride for it.*

What I've Always Wanted To Do Is...

When I look back into my earlier days as a child; before I was in trouble with the law, probation offices, and school. I remember how proud I used to make my mother and father. I remember when I first learned how to walk; ride a bike, tie my shoes, wrestle, play basketball, and the first day of preschool. I remember when I used to be mom and pops little boy. I also remember when my life changed faster then I could grab a hold of it. All I ever wanted to do was make my mother proud and happy to be my mother.

My name is Robert Jr, a sixteen year-old felon in custody in a Juvenile Jail. I have always wanted to be my parent's trophy. I have been, but that quickly changed. I was put on probation at the age of thirteen-years old. Before, I was very athletic, into school and wasn't involved in gangs or drugs. I was a somebody back then, but now it seems like every day is a challenge and everyday it gets harder. I felt like I was a disappointment to my mother. A disgrace to my father. It made my stomach turn and ache to watch the tears I put in my mothers eyes. I lost some pride and dignity as I was locked up; I even lost the most important thing in my life, my girlfriend. I know this time being locked down will help me think about my mistakes and the future of my life. I don't want to live like this forever. My mother and father are probably not very proud of me as they used to be when I was a champion with sports. All I ever wanted to do was make my parents laugh and smile, but I just ended up making them cry and sad.

Sometimes, when I sit in my room at night, when we are locked down I think. It's the best time to think in the day, just as it's the loneliest time in the night. I would crack jokes during visitation just to see my mom smile, I would do this just to make them think I was doing alright and was okay, but deep down inside my heart aches and longs for her love and it craves freedom.

My mother and father are most likely glad to be my parents. Everything I have done wrong in life has been pretty messed up; every time I got bad grades, got into fights, getting suspended from school and getting high and drunk, I felt disappointment and trouble knocking on my back door. I always thought that I was a failure because of the mistakes I have made in my life, now I know when you make mistakes don't beat yourself up because you can be forgiven.

I know that my mom and father will always love me, no matter how bad I have messed up. I know now that I could make my parents even more proud of me if I stay out of a place like this. I decided one way to conquer a goal in life is to stride for it. One thing I've always wanted to do is make my parents proud. I know my moms and pops are proud of me for finally realizing this before it was too late. That is all I ever wanted to do, was to be happy and a somebody my parents could call their own.

- Robert

Thoughts In A Cell

Once again, what’s crackin’ to all the homeboys? Shhh, last night in particular, I was thinking of what I would say to the judge. I have court on March 6, and that’s when they will determine if I could get charged as an adult. So I was thinking of what to say to persuade him to charge me as a juvenile. It’s hard to come up with the right words to say, so this is what I would feel.

Since I’m a SR (security risk) I can’t wait in the court waiting room with my parents. Also, I have no parents to come because they’re in a different state. So I have to face the judge on my lonesome. There are some ways to explain how I feel – I feel fear, lonely, tired and I await the words that are about to come out.

Life is hard at the moment and I have to await the judge’s verdict. What will the judge say to me? What will happen? Also when I tell my roommate what I’m going to say to the judge, I choke. I lose my words. I have nothing to say. My throat dries up and I start over, so many words to say, so many scenarios.

Tell me what do I say to the judge. I think of so much shhhh in my cell and I know once I step foot in that court waiting room it will come out smoothly. So stay up to everyone that is fighting their case. Be coo’ homeboys. Late...

-Chango, Santa Clara
From The Beat: You’re in a Catch-22 situation, Chango. The more you think about all you can say to the judge to convince him that you are not an adult and should not be treated like one, the more mature you sound! We have complete faith in you and your abilities to step up to the plate and speak the truth. That is what you need to tell the judge — that while you’re growing up and seeing the world in a different way now that was not the case when you committed this crime. That you were a child then, but one who sees the light of adulthood looming ahead. Even if your voice dries up, even if you choke up, be yourself and speak what you know to be true. We are praying the judge does the right thing.

Change
Hatred, Pain, Segregation, Tyranny and Blood Persistence, Pursuance, Happiness, Confidence and Love
The African-American has remade his past
The simplicity of clarity is here at last
As they say, slow and steady wins the race
And our beloved Barack Obama did it at his own pace
Change is here and no one should fear
We’ve discovered that chance can be exchanged for chains
We’ve discovered that any race, age or possibly gender can truly become president if they try
As a result there is no longer a need for tears, sobs or cries
Our savior of this country is amongst us
Barack Obama is the man to trust
Opportunities will present themselves, jobs will open up
Our citizens will stand tall and shout “WE’VE HAD ENOUGH!”
It’s about time for change!
All thanks to this man, the fruits of life are within range
He has made all this possible for us to believe
It is time for us youngsters to achieve
In the end Barack spoke words for a powerful story
So in his majestic eyes you will see the glory

-Chango, Santa Clara
From The Beat: We worry about putting so much hope in one man’s lap, but we also love the fact that he has given hope to so many who found no reason to be hopeful ‘til now. As you certainly know, the changes that his election bring are not for him alone to accomplish. It’s time for each one of us to step up, to do our part, to make this a better place for everyone. We expect you to be a leader in that regard!

Education

What’s up with The Beat? This is C-Rider, White Ninja. Education as we all know is boring, but everyone needs an education. Ninety-nine point nine percent of the time, you will not succeed without an education.

If you want to get a good job you have to take your education one step further and go to college. If you want to be a doctor, biologist, or even a dentist, you have to go to college. College will make your dreams come true. And even if you’re locked up you can still start the process of getting to college. When you’re locked down, don’t waste your time. Learn from your mistakes and handle your business.

-White Ninja, San Francisco
From The Beat: We don’t think you really mean that education is boring, but that school is boring! Actually, every new experience teaches us something, and that’s far from boring. It’s too bad, though, that so many young people find school a bore so they drop out before they realize how important getting that education is. We always tell young people to finish school, and then to travel to other countries to learn about the rest of the world and how they look at things. Education is something that goes on until we draw our last breath. What do you want to study at college?

You gotta take the good with the bad. Take it in stride.

I Want To Make My Son Proud
The only thing I live for is to make my son proud. My heart goes out to all the young homies running wild. I said a prayer for the mom's that done lost their children. The 12 year old that wants to forget God. Slow her down. Her life in shambles help her to turn it around.

Please reach out and help her. God before she drowns. I know that feeling when it feels like no one cares, when you're going through your problems, it seems like no ones there. I started to question myself to see if God really cares.

Sometimes I cut off the light in the room and start to wonder if he brought me this far to drop me off here? I know it seems sometimes like life ain't fair. They say the only thing you can count on in this world is prayer. I pray so much, I thought God couldn't hear because I've been through so much bull these last few years. It's hard to find mothers that are sincere. The street make sit so hard for you to think clear. I'd give up all this stuff to have my brother here. I got a call from my homegirl. Her mama died. Somebody home invaded and took her mama's life. I just help the phone and listened to her cry. She kept repeating herself. All she could ask was why? I can only imagine what she is going through on the inside, because when my brother went to prison, half of me died. Ain't nothing more precious then the world. My homie didn't lie.

You gotta take the good with the bad. Take it in stride. The right amount of pressure can make someone commit suicide.

Imagine pressure on a mother who can't provide. When everything is going wrong, it's hard to do right and if you are going through it right now all I want to say is someone loves you and try to do it right.

-Vanessa, Fresno
From The Beat: Life is hard for everyone but we must believe it will lighten and the meaning will become apparent. It is nice that you think about others and you help others out even when you are having a hard time too. Make your son proud and be there for him and with him. That’s all children want; to be with their mother.

Life

As another day passes, another one’s wasted
I gotta sit behind bars while all my patnas make it
Only have so much power and it’s draining all my energy
Days are getting longer and it’s harder for me to believe
Thinking of the time I lost, all the money gone
And all I can do is sit & write new songs
Think bout the future and what I’m gonna do
Gotta figure out if the game is true
But then again it’s called the game so has it been playing me
Because to me it feels like it’s manipulated my mentality
Because every time I end up in the same place
A new case with new charges to face
And don’t get me wrong, the money is beautiful
But is it worth the jail & all the ridicule?
If I remember right it felt good to be proud
And before I got in the game that’s what it once was
But now I must make a decision that’s best for my heart
Between the game and my family I’m being torn apart
One’s the future, one’s the past
I can’t decide life’s too fast
People say I’m crazy that I should choose my family
But see my decision doesn’t come that easily
Families aren't perfect neither is the game
But the pain & power it’s all the same
I can choose love if I choose my family
But then I choose abuse for that’s what happens to me
And I can choose the game, break off all my ties
But then who will hold me when a thug has to cry
All I know is I don't like the sound of penitentiaries
So I must change in order to go to a University
Dreams aren't just thoughts and aren't as hard as they seem
To not only follow but to complete your dreams

-Samantha, Solano
From The Beat: We hope that as you have some space and time that you might find some other options, in addition to this one choice- family or the game. We hope you may be able to get help in getting some boundaries put in place in your family, and set your own boundaries in “the game.” It’s so important to realize and remember you’d rather go to a University than a penitentiary.

This Life
A young boy born
Added to the family portrait,
Mom and dad planned it
‘Cause they knew they could afford it,
Raised with lots of love
And plenty of food to eat
A great education
And taught to stay on his feet
Greeted people with smiles
Yes sirs and no ma’ams,
A promised bright future
To a great young man
College was the plan
Even to be a star
That was until
He took a ride in a car
The location unknown
The car unowned
But that he didn’t know
Until the cops shown up
Now he sits while prisoners take advantage
Took protection from a click
Then his whole life vanished
It’s kraze-e

-Kraz-e, Santa Clara
From The Beat: This is a powerful autobiographical poem. We’d love to read more poems of how you got to this point and what your plans are to changing?

Bringing Back The Dead

If I could go back in time, I would wanna go back and see my two grandpas and my loving grandma. I would wanna see my two grandpas because I have never seen them before, and if I did see them, I probably would be a better person because they would teach me right from wrong. If I would be able to see and lived with my grandpa, I would probably do good and be a good person.

When I was growing up, my parents were never there for me, so I would be happy if I could have had my grandpas to be there for me because only a man can teach a man. When I think about it, since my dad was never there for me and never supported me, I would have liked my grandpas too.

I would also want to bring my loving grandma back because she was always there for me when my parents weren’t. She helped me and supported me through thick and thin. She was always there for me. I know it was hard for her to teach me how to be a man, but she did it, and for that I love her. (RIP Yun Chinn. I love you with all my heart.)

My grandma passed about two years ago from cancer and heart problems. She passed in my house, when me and her was talking. She just fell down and I caught her in my arms, so she died in my arms. I had only one chance to tell her something, and those last three words were, “I love you.”

Well, that’s all I have for you today, The Beat. Until next time. One last thing, “Rest In Peace to my loving grandma Yun Chinn and my two grandpas that I’ve never seen or met; I love you guys from the bottom of my heart.”

-Young Chop, Santa Clara
From The Beat: We feel the love in every word of this piece, and we know your grandmother loved you beyond words. We’re sorry that you had to grow up without a man to guide you, but now you must be the man in your own life guiding yourself. By now, you know very well what is right and what is not, and you also know where the wrong path can lead. So make your grandma proud, as well as the two grandpas you never knew. It’s in your hands now.

Money
Money ain’t nothing what people think about
Ninjas getting locked up or getting took out
Ninjas get locked up or killed over money
Ninjas go’n away real fast it ain’t funny
If you get right, then it’s all good
Get it legit and not in the hood
Stay alive ya’ll and don’t act funny
And remember it ain’t worth gett’n killed
or locked up over money!

-Lil Rolo, Alameda
From the Beat: Well said. How do you plan to make money upon your release? While things don't always go according to plan, it helps to open doors to have ideas you can follow through on.

Money
Money doesn’t really fix nothing but a bill. It won’t make you happy, it won’t keep you company, it won’t make a conversation with you, it won’t feed you, it won’t quench a thirst.

It’s just paper and when you’re a minor it can’t even get you out of jail. It makes you greedy and it barely helps the needy. Money barely helps.

-Ace, Solano
The Beat Within: We like the sense of humor you use when you write about this, contrasted with the seriousness of what you’re saying. We do need money to survive, but we can’t forget that other things are important too—we need both, and it’s a challenge to hit this balance in our lives.

Think Twice About Hurt

Just before I went to sleep last night, I thought about my family, but it wasn't just the everyday thoughts. I really got into it, like looking at how much hurt that I brought to my family. I could say I'm a better man for the fact that I don't want to repeat the same acts that got me put into this shhh hole again.

I'm ready to step up to the plate and be a success to better myself. Also to show my mother and family that I could do what a lot said I couldn't.

Man I just try to look at people and see how their issues are worse than mine. I take it as a wake up call; I wouldn't want to be in their position. Well I could be a man and be a different person or be a boy and continue the route I'm on. "Nope" I'm not the one

I'm a believer, leader, plus an achiever so I got to make my family proud to see that I'm going to change my ways for the best. I also want to thank my wife Elissa AKA Precious and my lovable family for being by my side through my hardest days. I love them to the fullest. No one will get in the way of my family, my wife or my freedom, so I'm going forward. No more looking back on the past.

Well, I'm going to cut this at this point, but next week I'm going to have a piece of the month, ha ha. You know how that one only Peanutt does. But to all stay, focused and have a positive head on your shoulders. Don't let nobody get in your way. Go about your business and stay on your toes. Well to all, stay up and love you Precious stay positive.

-Peanutt, Santa Clara
From The Beat: You are, indeed, the one and only Peanutt! It takes some courage to examine yourself as closely as you have, and to acknowledge the pain you have caused those you love the most. (At the same time, we hope you also acknowledge the joy and happiness you have also brought to them.) You're looking at your life as an adult, and that will let your own mind and heart tell you what is right and what is wrong, and to act accordingly. We hope you share this with your family because we know they will be very proud of you, as are we!

My Cousin Was My Role Model

Just before I went to sleep last night, I thought about a lot of things that had my heart crying out. The first thing that came to my mind was my cousin.

When I was little he took care of me when my dad and grandmother weren't around. He was there day and night. His love was more than a big brother or parent. It was beyond all of that. He taught me how to read, play the Sony Play Station, to do everything I know how to do today. He was my role model, not Kobe Bryant and Michael Jordan. My cousin was much more than them. To me he was untouchable.

Then I didn't see him for a couple of years. My dad told me he was in jail, but I never really knew what jail was and meant. So I didn't know how to cope with it and I started acting out.

After two years passed he came back and everybody saw the change in me. But later he went back in for his second strike, and I could barely maintain a 2.0 GPA. He often called to check up on me and I cried every time I heard his voice.

Years later he went back in for his third strike and it changed my life-- he was in for murder. To this day I cry and he either is going to get life or the death penalty. That's why I'm in the hall now and I wrote a song just for him it's called "Man I Miss You.

-Tyrone, Alameda
From The Beat: Thank you for sharing this piece about your cousin. We are so sorry to hear that he is locked up, and that his being in jail has brought you so much pain. But that doesn't take away from the fact that he was there for you throughout your childhood.

Bringing Back The Dead

If I could bring someone back from the dead, it would be my mother. I wonder where I would be or what I would be doing if my mom were still alive. I don't think I would be sitting in this purple and khaki. She died when I was only eighteen months.

Sometimes I feel incomplete, and maybe her love is what I'm missing. I can't really say I miss her, because I don't remember her, but I don't know... I feel incomplete without my mother.

From what people used to tell me, she was so beautiful-- thick, small waist, bright smile, and she was a hustler (just like me). My family says I look and act just like she did. In all the pictures I see of her, she looks so happy. I think we would be the best of friends.

-Angel, San Francisco
From The Beat: How did your mom die? If you are a hustler just like her, then maybe it's time to think of doing something else, because it's pretty obvious your hustle isn't working for you! What do you think your mom would tell you that would keep you out of places like this? If she were here now, what do you think she'd be saying to you? Do you think you'd listen to her?

A Solid Broken Heart

I have two dead brothers lost in street violence. I mean I would want them to come back but I feel as though they are in a better place.

My mom isn't dead in the flesh but her heart died a long time ago. If I could have prevented this I would have and the killings would not have affected me the way that it did. Being caught up because of the pain in my heart that I couldn't explain which made the streets more of an influence on me. The money that was in it! I was poor; I didn't have shhh.

What else could I do is what I used to think before I learned the hard way. My mom is so far from being in my life if I could hear her tell me that she loves me and mean it with life in her words all my pain would vanish. But since she has no life I can't and the reason why I know I will still make it is because I love her. She has never been a good mom, but she is still my mother.

-Tae Dump, Alameda
From the Beat: We are sorry for your losses, it sounds painfully challenging to go through while you're young. Your ability to love is intact however, and that is a great thing which will make your life much better. What life do you want to build for yourself?

Could Never

Money could never change life. Money could maybe help some situation that happens in life but it really can't do much. There's a lot of people in this world that depend on money to be happy and to live life.

If money is really powerful as everybody makes it seem like why can't money buy our way out of jail? Then why can't money buy our loved one's life back that aint here with us anymore? If money could do anything and everything then maybe it would mean more then what it does.

If money could change the past then I'll get all the money in the world to change it. Money can't change anything but make me feel like I'm wasting my time.

Times been hard and it's going to get real harder and money can't change that.

-Chow-Main, Solano
From The Beat: The things that money can do are limited, that's for sure. We do need money to survive in our present culture, however it can't like you say get you out of jail, or bring back loved ones we've lost. It's hard to balance our financial needs with our other needs as human beings, so hard that many people forget about balance and focus only on money.

Bringing My Dead Gs And Son Back

If I could bring anybody back, it would be my son and my little bro, lil' cousin, and my goon -ass ninja, Duck. They was the only people in this world that even understood what happen to me growing up.

People did some messed up shhh to me, and if my cous' and bro' was alive, it never would have happened. When Duck was alive, we did some goon-ass shhh together. We used to beat the block in the '08 vet on 18" chrome rims, twistin' up a Sweet.

If they was one thing I could tell my bro', cous', and goon-ass ninja is, they was my best friends and ride or die for life. But, as for my son, I would tell him I love him and he my heart and soul for life.

-Stacia, Fresno
From The Beat: If you could bring back all these people, what do you think they would want to tell you? If part of their message was, "Stop what you're doing that threatens your freedom and your life," would you be able to hear them? Have you changed anything about how you live life because of them?

Diversity

The respect for diversity is increasing rapidly. Recently various backgrounds have joined forces happily, Although we have diverged in the right direction, Walking the streets of Southeast still requires protection.

Diversity is the understanding of others

Regardless of race, creed, gender, sexuality, religion or color. Diversity needs to be taught at home and enforced in our schools,

So the next generation won't develop into fools.

The past needs to be taught with accuracy and grace,

So the heroes and victims of the past can claim their place.

A place in our hearts from the present to the future,

Elimination of hate needs to be humanity's tutor.

Future generations must claim love now,

Love for the differences of humans and respect for Mother Earth will conquer the negative somehow.

-Saetern, Santa Clara
From The Beat: You've hit another one out of the park, Saetern! We love how inclusive your definition of diversity is, and we agree that it is a quality that must be taught. We know that prejudice and hate are routinely taught, from generation to generation, so it's time to start teaching the qualities of love and tolerance so we can start loving ourselves and, by doing so, we can see our common humanity and love each other.

Bringing Back The Dead

If I could bring back a homie, it would be my cousin Tavarus. He was shot and killed two years ago. I believe my life would be different because I would have never thought of committing the crime I did to be in here. I would have never thought of doing the crime in the first place.

I would tell him that I loved him because I didn't get the chance to before he died. I would want him to tell me that the life that I'm going in now is not the best lifestyle and that I could have a very better life.

-Twaney Mac, Fresno
From The Beat: We believe he knew you loved him, even if you never told him those words. We also believe that he is still talking to you, and it's your responsibility to listen to what he's trying to tell you. If he were here telling you to change your life so that you don't have to come to places like this, or risk paying the price that he paid, would you be able to hear him? Would you be able to do what he asked? You can still make him proud of you, but it's in your hands.

Put an end to Violence

People around the world are using violence against one another. Violence is happening over money, food, land, oil, gangs, and drugs. People say violence is human nature, some say not; I say violence needs to end.

Violence is a big part of African American communities. People are getting shot, stabbed, robbed, raped; fights, alcoholism, and drug abuse.

America has caused so much violence in Iraq. Bush said America was going over to Iraq to get Osama Bin Laden. That was part of it; the other part of it was going over to get that oil that's over there and not caring about those innocent bystanders that are in the streets getting shot at by American soldiers.

Some people may not realize what this country has done to another, and that was bring so much violence into another part of the world.

I'm going to talk about the government for a minute. The government is slowly dismantling the constitution; it may not seem like it, but it's happening. They say the FBI doesn't need evidence to get a search warrant on a person, all they have to do is go to the courts, have a judge sign it, and it's valid to search that person or that person's place of residency; that's violating our Civil Rights. I think the government knew about everything before it happened; that means I think they knew about the Twin Towers and Katrina.

Now back to violence. I'm not saying don't use violence peacefully; make it peaceful violence. Speak with your mouth instead of your fist and weapons. Fine, express how you feel, but with words that are the most powerful violence there is. And when I mean peaceful words, it doesn't have to be bad language.

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. spoke with very powerful words, and now we are sitting, eating, and drinking from the same water fountains, sitting at the same tables, and eating at the same restaurants and hanging around whites, blacks, Asians, Mexicans, Indian, and all types of people because of nonviolence, and we need to continue that act.

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. had a dream, on January 20, 2009 that dream came true. We now have to change as African American people. We have to stop giving ourselves a bad reputation, not just African Americans, but all people of all races. We now have an African American president in the White House; I know things are going to change big.

This world wasn't made for people to kill, rape, steal, and rob from one another. This world has turned into something. It's not violence. The government has turned America into something; it's not the police who are shooting people for no reason, beating people for no reason. The violence has to stop, and it has to stop now. If violence continues in the world, nothing good will happen. We need to end it now.

I think Barack Obama is going to have a good impact on America; hopefully we can go over to Iraq and apologize for what we have done.

Hopefully we can move forward with things, and make a dream that all violence will end and not worry about people committing crimes. That change has to come and I believe it will.

-Andre, Alameda
From The Beat: A lot of people share your anger over the violence that is becoming more and more apparent within our country. Are there things you think you can do to help end violence on a small scale in your community? Is there a friend or relative you think you can talk out of using violence just one time? Every little bit helps, and spreading wisdom like your can be contagious. Once it starts, it ripples out to more and more people. Start the ripple!

-Young B. Speedy, Fresno
From The Beat: How has praying helped you? And if you believe in that higher power, why are you not changing the way you live, or advising others to do that? It seems like that's exactly what's called for. If god were praying to you, do you think you could hear his prayer? How would you answer it?

Fixing Family Problems Without Money

What money can't fix is issues, such as family issues and issues within yourself. Family issues can only be fixed within the family. Issues within yourself can only be fixed by you.

My family issues will either be fixed by me and my family, or by therapy, but whatever it is, I'm sure it will work. I love my family a lot, and would do whatever it takes to keep us all close together, forever. For example, it's hard for my mom to realize that I'm growing up, so she still tries to be strict about little things. But we're starting to meet halfway on things, and she's trying to start understanding me more.

-Elice, Marin

From The Beat: It's good to read that you're willing to go halfway to mend the problems you've had with your mom. As you get older, you'll realize that she's been where you are, and therefore worries more about you than you think she should. But a willingness to respect each other, to listen and to compromise, is a prescription for success and good communications.

Gone But Never Forgotten

If I could go back and stop death from happening, I would stop my uncle Pete from dying because my life would be so much different. I know for a fact I wouldn't be here because he was my best uncle. He always wanted to take me and my dad everywhere – museum, movies, Monterey Bay, and fishing.

If he was still alive, I would be a new person, none of this 666 or gang-banging. He was a good example, always showed us love, and that's what everyone needs. If everyone had love, this world wouldn't be violent because love beats hatred. I just ask God why did he take our loved ones away. I even made a rap a while ago:

(Chorus: No more hurting, no more pain, please heavenly father, please stop the rain. Why must my family have to suffer? Why must our loved ones have to die? Please heavenly father, please stop da rain"), and so on. The rain is tears. I would've brought it today, just ain't psychic, didn't know this topic.

I never told him that I loved him, but I just wish I could have told him when he was alive. I just gotta get out fast, one way or another (have faith) before any other of my loved ones pass. I gotta have the last time I can be with them you know.

-Moe Joe, Santa Clara

From The Beat: We're sure your uncle knew how much you loved him, even if you never got to tell him. If he is looking down on you right now, it's not too late to make him proud of you. Do what you know is the right thing, and you will make yourself proud too.

Money is the Motive

What's up Beat? People say money talks and it does. It can fix some problems and even buy you things. It can be used for good and bad. Me personally use it for both. Money ain't shhh though.

It can't buy you respect or give you that pleasure of life that you really look for. It can't buy you happiness or love. Things like hope and faith are priceless to what money can buy.

Sentenced time you can't pay out and that's a struggle by its own, but nevertheless, money makes the world go round.

-Ali, Solano

The Beat Within: Your title makes us think about how one guy said that if he had money he wouldn't be locked up—so it does help for sure getting what you need. We think, like you say, things like hope and faith and happiness and love are priceless—and, that being said—we wonder if it is true that "money makes he world go round."

My Mind Set

Wow, man! Today the Beat came and asked us to write about a bunch of topics, but at the very end there was one that stuck out what keeps you up at night thinking or what is always on your mind.

Let's see I think about a lot of things, but one thing that's always on my mind is family, and how I've always somehow seemed to mess up. It seems like no matter what I do I can never please my family! A lot of times they tell me I'm worthless, I'm going to amount to nothing, I'm never going to be able to be apart of a functioning society, that's just some of it! It puts me in a position to where I get that in my mind set, to where it always seems like I have to defend myself, or be something I'm not, just so I'm not judge or degraded by my own blood.

Well there is a bright side to all this negativity. I can use it to my advantage, and prove them wrong and actually accomplish something in my life. I will always love my family, I will always be there if they need me, but I realize that no matter what that when they look at me, they will always see me as that druggie, runaway, or however they see me.

I just hope that someday they will see me differently and accept me for who I am. Instead of always looking down on me and respect the fact that I'm not going to be that perfect Lil Girl that they want me to be, that no one's perfect, and everyone's different! Well I'm going to sign out on that note! PEACE!

-Lil' Skittles, Solano

From The Beat: We think sometimes families don't know what to do when they are really worried and out of control of their teenagers and they tell them what they are most afraid of, not what is true. We think your family is afraid that you won't be able to become who you might if you do drugs, they're afraid you won't be able to engage effectively with society...It will take time to rebuild their trust, and your own faith in yourself. You are right, no one's perfect—for sure, and we have to find our own way.

Messed Up Day

28th was an messed up day and some messed up shhh happened. I was supposed to get out right when I went to court. Judge was about to release me then my mom and dad told the judge that they didn't want me to come home and they think I'm going to sell drugs and rob people still.

So they detained me and now I got to go to a group home for six months and I already have been here a damn year and my mom came and visited me telling me some stuff and some shhh I didn't want to hear and what really ticked me off she was lying and put on my sister talking about may she die in surgery so she can make me think that she telling the truth. That was some messed up shhh.

-Didn't Want to Hear It, Alameda

From the Beat: That does sound like a really bad day, especially if you had no idea your folks were thinking that. It can be very challenging to re-gain peoples trust in you. It will take time to earn it back, and they sound like they're afraid to trust you. We hope you find something of value in your time in the group home—for yourself, and that eventually your family can heal.

If You Were Your Parent

What's up Beat? Well first and foremost I want to give love and respect to the homeboys out there. This the homeboy G coming at you from the max-unit.

Well, today I'ma be writing about if I was my own parent what I would do different. I would do nothing different from what my parents did. They raised me right, I just did wrong. What makes how my mom raised me right is she cared for me and showed me love. She showed me right from wrong, I was just stubborn and never listened.

Right now if I had a son in my situation, I would tell him to stay strong and never give up, that even though you're facing a lot of time, you can make something good of your situation.

-Baby G, Santa Clara

From The Beat: We think the advice you'd give your son is right on, and we hope you are taking strength from it. Why do you think you did you not listen to your mom? If your own son wouldn't listen to you, even when you were telling him things that could help him or keep him out of danger, how would you handle it?

I'd Talk To My Kids

If I was my parent, I would be more trustworthy and lenient. I would sit down and talk to my kids. I wouldn't yell at them. I would sit down and listen to everything they say, and make sure I was as understanding as possible. I would stay close to my kids, as if we were best friends and able to talk about anything. But I would still be a parent, as well.

-Elice, Marin

From The Beat: We're curious, did you adopt these excellent parenting skills by imitating what your parents have done with you, or by deciding to do things very differently from your parents' behavior? In other words, we'd be interested in reading how these principles have been used (or not) in your young lif

Money Can't Fix It All

What up witt The Beat? This ya boy, BR. I want to discuss the things that money can't fix, 'cause a lot of us think that money could fix love, hate, life, death, maybe rules, how you feel about others, like love and hate, personal problems and a whole lot of more stuff. But that never stops, so why waste paper?

To tell the truth, money don't fix none of that stuff, 'cause if it did, a lot of females wouldn't be single or raising kids on they own. It's lightweight. The same thing with personal feelings, 'cause deep down, nothing could change what someone experienced in the past. If that's the case, most of the people that's incarcerated would not be, 'cause we got money, but you can't change the law. I mean, you could influence what the judge thinks, but they can't go against the law.

But yeah, my mind just got off topic, so I can't continue what I was sayin'. To all my baby goon and big dawgs up in this G thang. Stay up, y'all.

-Br, San Francisco

From The Beat: It is interesting to look at people who won a lot of money in the lottery and see how quickly it's gone and they're right back where they started from. What do you think it will take to fix some of the problems in life that money can't fix?

Don't Want To Go To Placement

Everybody keep hatin' on me. I don't want to go to placement. I would rather go to drug court. Hopefully, I don't go, but if I go, I'ma do my time and get out of there and go back home to my mom. I love my mom. Don't let the system keep you down. Stay up!

-Lil' Hus, Marin

From The Beat: You have the right attitude, which is that sometimes you just have to bite the bullet and do what they tell you to do so that you can get what you want later. We hope you follow through and get back with your mom as soon as possible — and that this is the last time you let the system take you from her!

My Puzzle

All this time I've always try to fit in the last piece of the puzzle, to try to behave good. It was hard at first, always using the same side of the piece, and never fitting, now I know it's a basic movement I tried turning it in a different direction, and now it's complete, I feel like I'm achieving something very good.

I ask this question at night how long before the puzzle unscrambles, that I might need to start over again? I hope not.

-Luis, Solano

From The Beat: We like your metaphor about the puzzle and its pieces. Don't forget what it feels like when you get it right, when you feel the fit, and we're sure that if you get confused in the future you can bring yourself back to that right fit. You are learning about yourself, and it sounds like you're making good progress!

I Took It For Granted

I had every opportunity in the world to make my life better. I had more than what most kids in the hall had. I grew up with him and I called him dad. I grew up with him and he was all I had. He was all I needed. I had food, shelter, and clothes on my back. He gave me money if I needed it. He gave me money if I didn't need it. He gave me everything, and I just spat in his face. He cared is what it was... He loved me is what it was... I had every opportunity in the world to make my life better And I took it for granted.

-Steven, San Francisco

From The Beat: Your self-awareness about what you had and how you lost it makes this a very poignant piece of writing. But anyone who can analyze his situation as honestly as you have, can also change the future (but not the past). Is "he" still around? Can you make it up to him? Even if he's gone, you know what he wants from you... Can you give it to him (and to yourself)?

What Money Can't Fix

What's good with The Beat? This ya boy Ulala. The topic I'm gonna touch is "What money can't fix."

Money cant fix love; it can't bring yo' love back. Money can't buy me a get-out-of-jail-free card. Money can't fix your heart. But it sure could buy some other stuff that is useful. But other than that I'm gone.

-Ulala, San Francisco

From The Beat: You're right, Ulala, money is useful for some things but completely useless for others. What do you need for that get-out-of-jail-free card... and what do you need to stay of jail once you get out?

Real Friends And Fake Friends

What's up Beat? How you been? As for me, I've been all right, not that bad.

I've been thinking, do we have real friends on earth or are they all fake? In my eyes you can't trust no one, not even the people in your own 'hood. It's a sad story how I came to realize that you don't got any friends in life. Well, check this out Beat.

I used to love this girl. I mean I loved her with all my heart. I mean she went first out of all my so-called friends. She ended up breaking my heart and it hurt. She's the reason I can't trust no female. I mean after all that happened between me and her, I don't think I can trust a girl again.

Another thing is my so-called friends, the people you grow up with ended up snitching on your boy. That's why your boy is locked. All this scared me, and plus some shhh that happened in here, I feel like I can never trust another person in my life. It seems they always end up hurting you. They always say your closest friend you got is your worst enemy. Think about it. Bumps and bruises ain't gonna last forever, but a broken heart sometimes can't heal.

You know Beat, my mom always used to tell me, "Mijo, you don't got any friends in life." The day I realized that, her face popped up in my mind, and it's true. You really don't. I had to learn the hard way, too. It seems that no matter how much I do want to trust someone, I gots to get used to not, 'cause once I go to the pen — hopefully not, but let's say I do end up going — your best friend goes all bad now. It's smash on sight when you see him, mandatory 'cause your gang said. Now you gots to smash and possibly kill your ex-best friend. That's also a reason why I can't really get to trust someone that good, and if I do, it's only to a limit.

-Cash, Santa Clara

From The Beat: First, be careful about drawing big conclusions from small examples. Just because one girl broke your heart, that doesn't mean you can't trust any female! And second, you're not locked up because of what some snitch said about you. You're locked up because you gave that snitch the power he needed to save himself by rolling on you. If you had not given him that power — if you had not done the thing he snitched on you for — you'd still be free, and he'd still be a snitch in search of something to trade. Snitches are everywhere, including on the outs at the work place telling the boss something you thought you said in private. So learn from this experience, and stop doing the messed up things that give others power over your life! Of course, if you have to answer to a shot-caller, then you've given up all control of your life to someone else, and that's the problem!

What Money Can't Fix

What's up with The Beat? Man, money can't fix where I'm at right now. It can't fix the life I'm living. It can't bring back my brother who got shot six times in the stomach, or my girl cousin who got shot in the head for no reason, or my dead homies, can it? No, it can't fix my mom' tears, her lonely nights, her broken heart. Only I can fix that by coming back home, stopping her stress by going to school, bring positive energy to use my way, stop being on the block, and everything.

-Yung J. Newt, San Francisco
From The Beat: You're right; you have the power to put a proud smile on your mom's face and to dry her tears. You've outline a decent plan to make that happen by going home and going to school. We hope you follow through... for her sake!

Too Young To Be Locked Up

What up, Beat? Just before I went to sleep last night I thought about how I want to go home and do the right thing and go back with my mom. I been here six times, and have not made a change. But this time I want to change my ways, because this is not cool no more, to keep coming back to jail.

I'm too young to be in and out of jail. I'm too young to be in the system. I need to be at home and going to school, so I can be something. That all I got to say. Bye!

-Destiny, San Francisco
From The Beat: You've got your eyes on the right prize — getting your education! Even when you don't like being in school, just keep in mind that it's like a ticket to a better future, and one lived in freedom! Go for it!

What Money Can't Fix

There is so much things money can get you in this world. But of all the things money can get you, there is an equal if not greater number of things that money can't get you.

I think that everybody heard that money can't buy happiness. You can be the richest guy in the world and be miserable. On the other hand, you cannot have that much money and be perfectly happy. I wish money can bring back my ex-girlfriend, because if it could I would pay anything to get her back.

-Donald, San Francisco
From The Beat: When you don't have money, it's easy to imagine that money solves all problems. But, as you've pointed out well, there's no amount of money that can bring back those that are gone. We wish we had more money — like most everybody else — but we know it can't buy us happiness or those we've lost.

Bringing Back The Dead

Once my mama asked me whateva happened to the old me, when I was younger and innocent, when I was a lil' dawg with a lovin' heart an' shhh like that. If I could bring someone back from the dead, it would be the old me, 'cause that ninja don't exist no mo'. I'll bring him back fo' my mama, just to put a smile on her face.

It's been a while since I seen lil' whody anyways. Ya neva know how many lives I could've saved or been a role model to. I'm fo' sure I would've saved a couple lives... probably not save, but they'll still be livin', ya heard me? If I could bring back that lil' ninja...

Ya can't go back in time to bring people back, dawg. That's all I got fo' The Beat. I'ma get at y'all next week.

-Canon, San Francisco
From The Beat: We admire the creativity that led you to want to bring back the child you once were, innocent and loving. But we believe that child is still living inside you, Canon. You may have thrown on some thick layers of protection — that thug exterior — but the little boy that you used to be is still there to find and bring forth!

If You Were Your Parent

Well, I don't believe me and my mom and father got into it because they're my parents. Of course they're strict, but at the same time, they're also my friends, too. They're somebody I can also talk to about anything. And they're very supportive, like they want me to go in school, just like any other parent would.

One thing I believe I would change, not being so kind. I believe that my parents are nice, not too nice, but nice. And I believe sometimes I take that for weakness, and because I'm the baby, most of the time, I get away with it.

I don't want my child to be the same, because if I let her get away with one thing... And as a person today, having a child would change everything I do. I would attend to my child rather than run the street. I would also be going to school and have a job to support my child.

-Nikki, San Francisco
From The Beat: Now's the time to start preparing yourself for that adult responsibility by going to school, listening to your parents, and not taking advantage of things that don't really help you to mature. Don't wait until responsibility is forced on you. We hope when you get out of here, you'll take school a lot more serious, because it's like a ticket out of here!

Sorry, Dad

If I was my own parent, I would try to change everything that I've done into something positive instead of something bad. I need to change and do good, pay rent and work hard in life. I would say I'm very sorry to my dad, and how I acted toward him. If I could, I would change my past. I know I messed up bad, but God's on my side.

-Jason, Santa Clara
From The Beat: It's clear that you know what you have to do to become the responsible adult your father wants you to become. Of course, no one can change his past, but you can redesign your future based on what you've learned from your past. If God is on your side, it's because you are on his side.

Locked Up In The Hall

I am locked up in the hall.
I wonder how long I have to be under the system's armpits.
I hear the white walls talk.
I see camaradas coming in and out of this place.
I want all this to come to a stop.
I am locked up in the hall.

I pretend to understand myself.
I feel under a spell.
I touch my face wondering how I look after all the years of being gone from home.
I worry I won't make it in the real world.
I cry inside my head 'cause I gotta stay strong.
I am locked up in the hall.

I understand my mistakes.
I say enough with all this.
I dream to be out one day.
I try to escape my vida loca.
I hope these demons inside of me will leave me alone.
I am locked up in the hall.

-Temper, Santa Clara
From The Beat: We wish we could make your struggle easier, Temper, but those demons are for you to wrestle with and to overcome, just as we have all had to deal with things in our past we'd rather not have happened. The fact that you worry about making it on the outs is a sign of strength, not weakness, a sign that you are seeing things from a grown-up's perspective. Use that maturity to keep putting one foot in front of the other and walking forward.

My Cousin Sarah

I already wrote something, but the first topic of today caught my attention. If I could bring somebody back from the dead it would be my cousin Sarah.

She was with somebody who was racing and they were on their way back from work. He was racing a few of his friends and she just happened to be in the passenger seat. They fell off of the cliff and she died instantly.

I would bring her back from the dead for two reasons. One is to make her mother and sister and everybody else in our family and her group of friends happy again, because after she left everybody whose life she has touched was really upset and they have never been the same. T

The second reason is because I feel a need to apologize for stuff that we argued about because I feel it's my fault.

-Josh, Alameda
From The Beat: What a tragic loss for the whole family... As for feeling like it's "your fault" of course it isn't. And maybe you had an argument, but people who love each other sometimes argue, it doesn't take the love away. So we hope you realize that the love you felt for her, and the love she felt for you, is real and doesn't go away just because of an unfortunate fight!

Bringing Back My Dad

If I could go back in time and change things and bring somebody back I would have to bring back my dad. I say that because if I had my dad I won't even be here right now.

I wish I could have some man role model at home. And some type of man being at home telling me to go to school and stop hanging with the people I'm hanging with the. Instead of hanging on the corner he would tell me to go to some library and study instead of trying to be in the streets just being stupid.

I wish I had my dad because I know for a fact if I had a dad at home I for show would not be in jail because he would beat my butt every time I didn't go to school or didn't listen to my momma and grandma. I wish I could bring back my dad so that all my pain and struggle could go away and I could have someone to look up to instead of the streets. It would just be different. He would show me the right way to become a man instead of shooting somebody or selling drugs. He would show me the right way and give me advice not to be like him. Just to be better than him, and smarter than him.

-Kris, Alameda
From The Beat: It is painful and unfair that so many Beat writers have had to grow up without fathers in their lives. And to be honest, it sounds like you already know exactly what you need— can you be your own best role model? Or are there other male role models in your life that can show you a more positive path then the one you are on?

I love my Pops

If I can bring back somebody I would bring back my dad. I would bring him back cause I need a father figure in my life.

I would tell him how much I appreciate everything that he ever did for me and how much he loved me and I would also tell him I love him to death and I still love him always, nobody can change that.

I would want my pops to tell me to have a safe life and have a couple Johns and keep the name-but with all that being said I love my pops forever.

-John, Alameda
From the Beat: We are sorry for the loss of your father. We're glad you know how much you appreciate what he did for you and how you feel about him, if you do have more Johns you at least have an idea of how you'd want them to feel about you too. You'd also want to be there for them, since you know the pain of the loss of a father.

Bringing Back The Dead

If there is one person that I would want to bring back from the dead it would be my mom. My mom was there for me since I was little. She did her best to make sure I had everything that I needed and most of the things I wanted. My mom was the most caring person I knew. She would always give a homeless person the loose change she had; one time it was the rest of her quarters from laundry day. It was like nine dollars.

My mom would take care of all my friends when they came over. When I was little, my mom would order the special wrestling matches and barbeque for all my friends that were there. If I could tell my mom one thing, it'll be that I'm sorry for all the pain I put her through and that I love her for raising me right. My life took a turn for the worst after she passed away.

-Donald, San Francisco
From The Beat: Losing your mother is one of the hardest losses we ever have to suffer, and the hole her passing has left in your life won't be easily filled. But one thing you can do is to live up to her expectations for you. She didn't want to see you here, so we hope when you touch down, you will honor her memory and make her proud of you.

Losing a Friend

Losing a friend can be hard
As to winning a cardsharp in a game of cards
Losing a friend can be painful
As to breaking a bone on the blacktop
Losing a friend in battle can't be brought back
As to gangsters stabbing each other in the back
Losing a friend after such a short time
I would not have traded fame and fortune for that time
Losing a friend can never be good
As to the teeth in George Washington's mouth made of wood
The last days we spent together it felt like you knew
The way I felt I almost knew
The high I felt we spent that last day together
No drug could give you
Awaking and hearing you were no longer here
It went in one side and came out the other ear
The feeling I felt I've never felt again
Than those of the meaning
When you lose a friend

-Robert, Alameda
From The Beat: This is a really thoughtful piece. You give the readers a really good idea of what it's like to lose someone you care about. But if losing a friend gives us anything good, it's that it helps us remember how important they were to us.

It's All A Balance

Wha's up Beat? I'ma keep this short. Life is what you make it, so make it right. Struggle if you have to, but everything will be all right. There's always a good from bad and bad from good. That's the way life balances out.

If life wasn't balanced, then there wouldn't be amazing things. For example, there's money. People kill people over money. People turn on their friends and even their own family just to get some money. The good from it is that it can bring material objects that you need in life.

Anyways, this is where it all ends. Time is out but still runnin'. Late. Out of sight, out of mind.

-Young Loony, Santa Clara
From The Beat: Even when we wish you had written more, added details and examples, we still have to give you props for making us think, for challenging your readers. If life is a balance, what good are you going to do now (besides your wonderful writing) to help to balance the scales from your past? Tell us how you are going to be the "good" that comes out of the "bad"...

Reality

Sitting in Alameda County Juvenile Hall, reminiscing, going insane, thinking back when I was on the block.

Had court today, they talking about what's gonna happen if you go to "CYA." Had a phone call too, she said you can't come home to stay. I'm like what am I supposed to do? I'm slowly fadin' away. She's like, you put yourself in that position, you made your own choices. Go and do your time and stop running away.

It's like every time I think about everything in life tears slowly fall down my face. Straight from the heart, it's like nobody understands me. When I say I been through a lot it's like they don't know where I come from, they don't understand that part.

So I say here, take my shoes, go take a walk in my hood. It's like I want to change, but this environment is all violence and gangs. But I'm gonna change, I'm gonna make it somewhere, I'm gonna reach my goals and grab my dreams.

-Lil' Chachi, Alameda

From The Beat: You clearly have a lot going on, a lot of things in your community holding you and even keeping you away from your goals. When things get tough and you get tempted to run or do something you know will get you in trouble, try to think back to those goals. Make a plan, in detail! Figure out your steps, and keep the next ones in your head to help keep yourself straight and on the right path.

Days of Feeling Depressed

Today I was feeling ok; you know keeping myself strong, with God's help. I was happy today because I got a letter from my mother today, with perfume sprayed on it so you know that meant something special to me.

I get emotional when I get something from somebody, you know because I'm in jail, I don't feel lonely. And what was great about her letter was emotional to her, she wrote me a poem from the heart and I loved it.

I feel a little down graded because I haven't talked to my PO and I'm scared in here, think I might go crazy in the mean time. Well I go to court on soon, and it seems like it's taking a while. But I tell myself I'm gonna stay strong for me, and hope that my judge, PO,, and attorney won't just judge me as a bad person, and just hear, listen, and feel me, for now I know I'm a better person. And a good person. Just read me.

-Deja, Alameda

From The Beat: You titled your piece "Days of Feeling Depressed", but it sounds like you have a lot of positive things to say. You've got a mother who you love who it seems cares just as much about you, and you're thinking positively about coming across well in court. We admire your ability to hold on to positivity, this is something a lot of Beat writers struggle with.

Bringin' Back The Dead

If I could go back and save my dad I would. Truthfully, I think my life would be very different, for the good and maybe the bad. I would want my dad to tell every experience of his life that he could remember, from going to jail, how he met my mom, and how to provide for a family the right way.

If I had a chance to sit wit' him now, I would like him to let me know that I had his love and support and that this is short term and I'll get over this hill. I would tell him what I've wanted to say since he died... I love you pops

-Ballard, San Francisco

From The Beat: We feel sure that your pops knew that you loved him, but it is something we don't read often enough in The Beat, where fathers are often cursed out instead of praised. Since he's not around to tell you, we can tell you that this is short term, and that you can and will get over this hill. When you do, don't come back!

What Money Can't Get Back

I believe money can't fix time. Meaning the way you're chasing the paper if illegal you get arrested you will never get the years in jail back. Also if you die you can't get your life back.

No matter how much money you have you cannot get these two things back. And these are the only two obsessions of chasing illegal money.

Personally I believe hard work makes your money more enjoyable.

-Lenzy, Alameda

From the Beat: Sometimes people need money, no matter where it comes from—to feed kids etc. However it's clear that it would be much better, for the kids etc. if it came from legal sources. We agree that if you earn your money you feel better about the money, and yourself—and that what money can do is limited.

Discrimination

Today we had a discussion about gay people and how they shouldn't be discriminated against. I agree with this because I am gay and I believe in equal rights for everyone. Even if I weren't gay I would probably still believe this because of the way my mother raised me.

It doesn't bother me that much when people talk about gay people but I'm sure there are people out there that get offended. I have had so many people make fun of me and put me down because of my sexual orientation and I have let it get to me in the past but I got over it quickly. However, there aren't many people out there like me that take it as well as I do. That's why it is so important to be careful what you say around people you do not know.

You never know what a person is like when you do not know who they are and what kind of lifestyle they came from. I really hope this piece gets published because there is a very important message in it.

So remember all men are created equal and shouldn't be discriminated against. Thanks Beat, for all your love and support. You have inspired me to write this piece.

-James, Alameda

From The Beat: Thank you for sharing this piece with us! We're so happy that you stepped up and decided to share this piece of yourself. It's amazing that you don't fly off the handle when someone makes fun of you, many people would. Even though you don't get angry anymore, what do you think about the kids who make fun of you just because of your sexual status?

Why?

I don't know why I'm still here
don't know why I did what I did
don't know why I do what I do?
Why do I have what I have?
Why do I feel what I feel?
Can anyone explain why? Why are the people in my life here?

Why can't they do anything to help me?
Why do I have the problems I have?
I just need someone to explain why.
Why am I wronged when I try to do right?
Why do I do right when nobody's looking?
Why do I talk when nobody's listening?
Why do I get treated like everybody else?
When I act like none of them?
Why do I even bother?
Please tell me why

-Josh, Alameda

From The Beat: We wish we had an answer for you, Josh, but the questions you are asking in this sad, strong-minded poems are the great mysteries of life. And the truth is that for most of these questions, the only person who can answer them is – you.

Street Fightin' Man

It's that one and only Eagle coming at you from the max. Well Beat, lately I've been not doing shhh, just working out and staying strong physically and mentally.

I got on supply just recently, so I've been falling off lately, but I'm getting back on it. Damn, it's hard though because I got all these new responsibilities and all this time out of my room, hella extra shhh like candy, food, a lot of substances that get you fat and lazy. I had a week to relax and eat hella junk.

But I think this is good for the fact that it's kind of like being out. You have all the time in the world, you go to school, work, all this extra shhh you can have at just about any second you want, but it's about having self-discipline.

I made up my mind a couple weeks ago and I'm going to be a boxer big time - ESPN, Vegas , everything! You gon' see me on posters and be like what's crackin' in my Beamer full of beautiful women with a thirty-two in my hand ready to party all over again.

It's a lot of work and I got all this extra time to become a fighting machine, but I've never boxed like as an amateur. I've always just been a street fighter. And I don't like getting hit so I'm going to have to get over that.

But yea, if society won't accept me in a positive matter, then they will see me in a ring, knocking fools out straight up like that.

Well court is soon, I'll probably lose my fitness, so I'll probably start going to adult court soon. But whatever happens, I'm ready.

At this point I'm probably in the best shape of my life, but I can still use a couple more months to prepare for the worst but whatever happens I'll be ready.

To all out there on the quick ride, stay up and take care. To all on the long ride, I'll see you around. To all those going to YA Alternative, you're better off going to the Y. I've been there done that already and if the lifestyle you want to live is against the law and involves a lot of criminal activity, you're better off in the Y.

-Eagle, Santa Clara

From The Beat: We're glad to hear that you're doing great in here. But, you don't have to be in the system to able to do the things you could have been doing successfully on the outs. Boxing is a great goal, but in order to become a good boxer, you need discipline. What about education? We'll stay tune...

I'm Lookin' For Guidance

I'm lookin' for a way
A path that I can go
As I look up to the skies
and drift down to the snow
I'm lookin' for help
To help me get through
Before I end up dead
I want to be bullet proof
My times will be hard
But life will be soft
I'm just an ordinary kid
I'm not found but I'm lost
When I think I get life
My dreams go and fade away
Like a boat up on a river
It slowly drifts away
I pray every day but I never go to church
I thought life was gon' be good
Ever since my day of birth
But I see that I'm wrong
'Cause I'll never be right
Because on the streets ain't nothin'
But gun violence and fight
I'm just lookin', not for violence –
Because I'm lookin' for that guidance

-Lil' Quan, Alameda

From The Beat: If you keep looking, you will find it. Ask for a mentor through the Be-A-Mentor program. Ask to take Cyrus's reading class. Sign up for Cornerstone. Take that EMT class if they offer it again. Reach out to the positive things and people you see, and let them help you find the peace you seek.

Just Before I Went To Sleep

Just before I went to sleep last night I was thinking about my mom. I was thinking about how much I appreciate what she's done for me.

I'm pretty ashamed at myself, because I haven't been there for her during these last three years too much. I've been selfish and always made a bad decision that takes me away from my family. She needs me home. My mom needs my help and I'm not there.

As of today I got two weeks until my release date. When I step back in the streets things are gonna be different. I gotta keep it real for my mama now. After everything she's done for me, and never once has she left my side, I owe her my help and care. Since my dad isn't doing shhh, my mama needs me for sure. She works seven days a week so she needs a helping hand at home.

-Jake, Alameda

From The Beat: We can feel your love, regret and determination through this piece.

Bringing Back My Uncle

Well, my name is Lil Shadow. I'm from Livermore. I'm going to talk about bringing back the dead.

Well, I would like to bring a lot of people back, the most important one is my uncle. I would like to bring him back because he inspired me to do good things. He made me stay healthy and made me play sports.

Well, I was sad when I found out he was dead. I was crying real bad for weeks. I felt so empty inside. He was shot four times. After he died, I turned bad and I got into a gang. I started kicking it with them and now I'm locked up in Juvenile Hall.

I think my life would have been different person if he was still alive. I probably would have still been playing sports. If he was still alive, I would tell him that I love him and I would never want you to leave me. I love you Unk.

-Lil' Shadow, Alameda

From The Beat: If you're uncle worked so hard while he was here to make sure that you stayed out of trouble and did good then why are you repaying him by throwing your life away? Even though your uncle is gone he's still with you in many ways. Your uncle would have wanted more for your life than this, Shadow, we hope that you want more for yourself too.

Just Before I Went To Sleep Last Night I Thought About...

Just before I went to sleep last night, I thought about what I am about to face and the responsibilities that are coming my way. I thought about the long and hard ROP program and how I have no choice but to deal with it and complete it.

I also thought about my child that will soon be brought into this world and how my lifestyle must change in order for me to be a successful father. I have to give up a lot of the things I used to do because I now have someone depending on me to take care of them and I can no longer only think about myself.

Even though I am not ready for the responsibility, I still have to handle my business to the best of my abilities. I'm just going to put my faith and my trust in a higher power and continue to remain humble and pray that all goes well.

-B, Alameda

From The Beat: We commend you for taking your new responsibilities so seriously. What is your plan for changing your life? Prayer is important, but it's equally important that you have clear goals, and steps for reaching that goal.

It Would Be Menace

If I could go back in time and prevent one death from happening, it would be my homie Menace from my 'hood. He passed away last year. He was like my brother. Him and I used to be always together.

He used to live across the street from my house and I still remember the last time I saw him and talked to him. I was on the run form my probation, and the day I was out was the last day I saw him.

I remember when I was here, I was on supply and I called my mom to see how she was doing. When I was talking to her, I noticed that something was wrong and when I asked her, she started crying and she told me that Menace was dead.

That night as I was in my room thinking about all of the things that we used to do, I felt lagrimas (tears) coming down my eyes, and until this day he's still in my heart, and I'm sorry that I couldn't go to his funeral because I was here. I just want to say rest in peace carnal. I will never forget you.

-Lil' Casper, Santa Clara

From The Beat: We are sorry for your loss. Sometimes things happen for a reason. The same way your mom shed tears over the loss of your homies, she sheds tears over your current situation and would shed tears if something bad happen to you too. Use his death as an example of what can happen to you if you continue living the type of life you're practicing right now.

Money Can't

I got a while lot of money I can put it on yo' head
One thang fa' show money ain't bring back the dead
Money is the g code to the game
Money can cause death and bring more pain
It's crazy what money can make a young girl do
Money can cause trouble and blackmail you
I had people in my family who change money for the supply
Who tried to get money but end up getting some time
All money ain't good money for real my dude

-Young Arco, Alameda

From the Beat: what you say is true, and heavy, and describes how people's lives are ruined. We edited your last line because we wouldn't want your life to be ruined over money too.

I'm Back

Just before I went to sleep last night, I thought about a couple of things, my mom and dad. My dad is pissed off at me for being arrested for the second time in a week. I think about how disappointed they are with me, and what they might say in court. Like they cant handle me anymore.

My dad even said to my PO he wasn't coming to court. My mom told me the same thing and that she doesn't want to see me arrested anymore.

My biggest problem is weed. I was caught smoking and selling by the police. They caught me at the school two times. I go to Robertson School. It's a continuation school in Fremont. I think I just got kicked out of there, and now when I get home I'll go to school in Hayward. I am in 8th grade too.

I feel bad and sad for what I'm putting my parents through. I think I lost their trust and they're not going to believe me anymore because of my bull-shhhh. What I need to do is stop getting involved in drugs 'cause I smoke weed every day been smoking since 2006, almost three years. I do it 'cause I'm always depressed, especially with my family, and what we are through. I hope my parents say the right thing and get me out of Juvi and I stop doing drugs.

-Ian, Alameda

From The Beat: You see the problem, and now it must be on you to stop using and address the pain you feel. You can get through this period. It is not going to be easy, but, given your intelligence and your supportive family you can make the change!

Just Before I Went To Sleep Last Night, I Thought About...

I thought about what my lady is going through right now. 'Cause last night she told me that she lost the kids. Soon as she told me that my heart dropped. I was supposed to have twins, so it was disappointing. I always had dreams about them, and I was planning on providing for them the best way I could so they could have a better life.

I would of loved for one of my kids to carry on my name, 'cause you never know when it's your time to go. Plus me and my lady even gave them names. I was picturing a beautiful future for me and my family, but it's over now.

I'm going to keep it solid- I shed a few tears. Y'all don't know how it feels. She was five or six months, so close. But she kept telling me that she was always bleeding. She went to the doctor one time and they gave her some pills, and told her to take it easy and get some rest. But she really couldn't do it because the owner of her house told her she had to move out. She even cleaned the whole house by herself, had to pick up the washing machine. So she started bleeding, and kept bleeding. She went to the doctor and they said it's an 85% chance you will lose them, if you don't rest. She had no choice, the owners of the house were all on her back. So she was always busy. And it was over.

I blame myself for being in that car and getting busted, instead of doing right, so I could be out there helping her. It hurts, but I still love her.

-Loony, Alameda

From The Beat: What a painful thing to have happened to you and your girlfriend. We are so sorry to hear about the loss of your twins. But sometimes, things do happen for a reason. Maybe you two are meant to have children a little later down the road, when you are not locked up, and when you CAN be there for your family.

Listen To Your Parents

Yesterday, before I went to sleep, I thought about what I did wrong all these years, and how I got in here (JCC). The thing I did wrong all these years was I didn't listen to my mom, "Remember, be good." I didn't, and when my mom yelled at me, it was good for me. If I listened to her, I would never ever be in JCC.

Now I feel bad whenever my mom come to visit. She cries, so that make me cry. I feel bad for all the things I did. I got court on this Thursday. Wish me luck, and remember, always listen to your parents. They are always right.

-Mike, San Francisco

From The Beat: We don't think your parents are always right, but we do think they've learned a lot more about life than you have, so it is important to listen to that voice of experience. Your mom has sacrificed a lot for you because she wants you to succeed, without risking your freedom. Maybe it's time for you to do a little sacrificing for her (stop doing those things that let the system take you from her), so you can replace those tears of sadness for tears of joy!

Admire My Mom

If I was a parent, I will do what my mom did for me and my brother. Like, she supports us, buys us what we want, and when we in jail, as of now she comes to everything and if she don't she sends money with my grandma so we can have the snacks we want.

And we do some messed up stuff like come to jail and that ain't right and I want to be like my mom, a strong woman and she stay with money from her job and that's what I'm going to do as a parent, take care of my responsibilities like my mom do and all the stuff.

I don't think I wouldn't have made it through. That's why I say my mom is a strong woman 'cause I never seen my dad, he got life and she took care of me, my brother, and my little sister. That's a role model.

-Deaddrian, Alameda

From The Beat: Your mother sounds like a very supporting and caring woman, why are you paying her back with this? We know that she wants more for you than this, why else would she try so hard for you? We hope that you can open your eyes and see how much you mother does for you, and stop throwing away the life she's giving you!

Messin' Up

It's yo' boy Kash Money, from Oakland! I had a meeting with my PO today and he said that I been messin' up. I was doin' really good in the beginning, but he said I could still get out in March if I don't mess up no more.

I'm gonna stop messin' up so I could get released. I still haven't been home. This week is my last week of restriction, and I get to go home on my birthday, February 20. Well I talked to my folks on the outs this last Saturday and I heard that my cousin went down again, he was messing up after his release from here, and he knew it too.

-Kash Money

From The Beat: You know, it doesn't have to be like that for you - you made a decision to stop messing up so you could get out, which means you also have it in you to stop messing up so you can stay out!

If They Were Still Alive

If my patna Miguel was still alive, I would tell him how his brother is messing up - going to jail, smoking, doing hella stuff and I would tell him to calm down and be safe and don't get on that go-cart. That's what I would tell him if he was alive.

I also wish my granny on my dad's side was still alive, 'cause once she died I really didn't care about nothing. I would tell her: I love you and wish that I could have spent more time with you.

That's what I would have told her and what I would have said if I were still alive.

-Festy

From The Beat: Do you still feel the same way, like you don't care about nothing? Because from this piece it sounds like you still have a whole lot of heart, and we KNOW your grandmother would want you to keep caring about life!

I Only Think Of Her

Just before I went to sleep last night I thought about my three-month-old daughter. I think about how much she needs me. She is the most important person, the most important subject in my life. I often wonder what type of life she will have in the future. I hope to make a change, not for me but for her. I want to her to have a better life than me.

-Ab

From The Beat: Firstly, we think the rest of your life could still be very very good. Secondly, sounds like you are off to a good start with such love for your daughter. Lastly, hoping for change is good, but change takes some work, and a plan. Do you have a plan? We'd love to hear your ideas for how you will change your life for your daughter.

My TR With My Girl

Today I went home on a TR - it was cool, I got a five hour home pass. I had to go to the doctor for about thirty minutes, so then I had four and a half hours to myself. I really didn't do nothin' but kick it with my girl at the house. We went to eat with my mom at a restaurant, and my mom hella likes my girl, ever since she met her in '04. Well when we went to my room, me and her talked a lot about different things. She can't wait until I get out in March. There's a lot of things we want to do, like we used to.

Well, I don't know, she's hella happy that she's gonna have my baby. Me too!

-Chucho

From The Beat: Wait, do you mean your girl is pregnant? This is big news! You might be a father in less than a year? We are glad you had a good home visit.

Thinking Of My Family

Just before I went to sleep last night. I thought about my family because the judge told me to. They were going to release me yesterday but then the other attorney said that I haven't been going to school and acting bad that my parents couldn't control me.

My family got tired of me then just left me alone and let me do whatever, but they still feel me and took care of me. So all I thought about was my family and how I treated them.

-Tony

From The Beat: What must you do to stay out of juvenile? Good luck returning home.

He Was A Good Man

I'd bring back my grandpa 'cause he was a cool person and I wish he had never passed away. He was a good man. He also was a gangsta, he got shot a long time ago in the kidney but that never stopped him, he was strong all the way, and he was dying slowly. He had a drinking problem also. But when he died, I was mad 'cause I'm tired of losing all my family members. I know probably if I lose another I'm gonna go bad.

-Monie Bo

The Beat Within: We're sorry to hear of what happened to your grandfather, but this isn't a reason to "turn bad", , your grandpa would have wanted more for you than this. .

I Would Bring Back My Granddaddy

Man if I could bring back the dead I would bring back my granddaddy.

I really wouldn't be here when he died. I felt very depressed I felt like there wasn't no point of me being here I started doing hella shhh, not going to school, doing hella unnecessary stuff.

But yeah when I get out, trust me I'm going somewhere. Believe it ...watch when I get out of this bs

-Saharah

From The Beat: Grief often makes us self-destructive, but of course your grandfather would hate to think that you were adding to your pain by getting in trouble. What about doing it the other way around, living well in honor of his memory?

My Family

I wish I could bring back my grandma so that I would be a better person. My family could be more disciplined a lot of things would not have happened. One of my uncles would not be in the prison. She held my family together, I was sad because I didn't.

-Lvrat

From The Beat: It must have hit you and your family so hard when your grandmother passed, especially since she was such a pillar in your family. We hope that you and your family can work together through this tough time in your lives, you'll need each other if you are going to pull through this!

I Thought...

I thought about my mom and what I could do when I got out. I miss my family, stressed out right now. Trying to figure out when I am going to get out. I thought about my sisters. A lot of stuff, free me.

-Lil' Monster

From The Beat: A lot of thoughts seem to be running through your head, have you thought about how you're going to stay free once you are free?

Bring Back The Dead

I wish I could bring you back, I wish I could change that day. I wouldn't have let you leave, I would have made you stay. I would have told you to be cool, and to let things calm down. I would have taken the keys from you and told you to sit down but now you're gone, all because of your pride I know you couldn't go out -- it was killing you inside.

I thank God everyday for the fact I wasn't with you and I also think about what if those bullets wouldn't have hit you. I miss you bra, I wish I could change the past but I can't so my memories are from when I seen you last.

-B
From The Beat: We are sorry to hear about the death of your friend, but are also relieved that you didn't go with him that day. Does his death make you think differently about your own life? Does it make you look at the future differently?

Pictures Of You

Today for some reason I'm not mad that I'm in the hall. Even though we been in here for two months I'm just happy to be alive!

Pictures of my father are my best memories because my father is dead. Every time I look at a picture of him it makes me sad because I barely knew him. But it also makes me happy because I was in a lot of the pictures I got.

-Lil' Seag
From The Beat: It's great that you're seeing the glass as half full - this is something we don't see in a lot of writings. This outlook on life can do great things for you - don't lose it!

If I Were a Parent

If I was a daddy I have to be on my grind 24/7. More than I am already but being more careful with what I do. I don't need to go back to jail with a daughter or son on the way.

Being careful about what I do and as soon as I'm off probation I will get a real job and an apartment where me, my girl, and my son or daughter live. Let my girl stay home while she's pregnant while I'm working all day to take care of them.

When the baby is born my girl will get a job and the baby will stay with my mama. Till he or she is old enough for day care and school. Then when I get enough money buy a house where we can all live happily ever after.

-Doughboi
From the Beat: This sounds like a plan, and we're happy you are determined to do whatever it takes to be a daddy. Your girl, your mama and the baby will all need you to be a free man, helping out and not locked up!

Who I Want To Be When I Grow Up

The question of who I want to be when I grow up runs through my mind multiple times a day. One career runs through my mind more than anything. The first person I would take off the face of the Earth is my father. The reason I chose my father is because he deserted his two firstborn sons just to go mess with some other woman.

Then becoming a stick-up ninja robbing everyone for their rims and drugs came to mind too. But then my faith in God always pops-up out of nowhere.

-Brand New 3000
From the Beat: We understand you'd be angry about your father's decisions, especially since kids really need their father's love and attention--and we'd agree that should come before romance. It's hard to understand other's choices sometimes. When your faith in God pops up out of nowhere [or out of your self] what happens?

My Grandma

If my grandma would bring back to life, I would probably go to her house a lot and talk to her, ask is she's feeling alright, or if she was feeling ill. And I would tell her that "thank you." I would probably expect my grandma to tell me to stay out of trouble.

-Chao
From The Beat: What kind of relationship did you have with your grandmother before she passed? What are some of your memories with her?

Money Can't Buy You a Cure

Money can't fix a lot of things. One of the things that money can't buy is true love. One other thing money can't buy is respect. Money can't bring no body back from the dead and money cant buy you a cure for aids, cancer or snitching.

But money can also do a lot of things. You can buy happiness because a lot of people like money. But more money brings more problems

-Big Body
From the Beat: Money sure helps us get what we need, however it doesn't provide what is often most important in life. We need to balance our need for money with our other needs, which can be a challenge but is so important.

Bringing Back the Dead

I think I would bring back my cousin Charles aka Doobie. The reason I would bring back Doobie is because he was like a big brother to me, because he would tell me that I should stay in school and that I shouldn't be on the corner trying to sell drugs. Because all that led up to is the pen or dead. So I took his word and got off the corner and a couple of months later he got killed and that messed my life up for a while.

The last thing I want to say to him is thanks for the advice and I miss you and I love you big bra. I would want him to tell me that I'm proud of you but he would also say stay out of jail. I miss you Doobie.

-Devontay
From The Beat: We're sorry you lost someone so close to you, someone you looked up to. Sounds like he said some things to you that have really stuck, things that can really help you make positive changes in life. Keep his words with you.

I'm Not Feelin the Topics Tonight...

I'm waiting for a placement to accept me which is frustrating me and it is going to be tempting to run again. Hopefully I get accepted so I can leave this week or next week. I am glad my brother will be released this week, I look forward to seeing him free without any worries...

-Chris
From The Beat: It's always tempting to run from a place you don't like. We hope you keep the big picture in mind though - if you run, what will happen next? What will happen if you get caught? Are those consequences worth the risk?

Metaphor

I had a boom-box who would sound off my name for my alarm and tell me to carry on to school even though I got up in the afternoon. Then I got annoyed so I ran it over, it didn't break! Now it has tire tracks...

-S
From the Beat: How does it work out for you when you are annoyed and you choose to just "run over things?" Do other things in your life have "tire tracks" on them too?

What Money Can't Fix/Bring Back the Dead

What's good Beat, this is young Nuttso Savage writing about bringing back the dead. You really can't bring back the dead.

I wrote once in the Beat about Heaven's stubbiest Angel, about my dad and if I could I would most definitely bring him back or call him the night he died and tell him don't go to the city. Or just at least spend some time with him before he left us.

I would also bring back my cousin ray j and my cousin dame and a whole lot of other people. Thomeisha rip Bo RIP uncle Booksie, Tyraz, red, hen, burger, car, wood, and a lot more.

And dat's what money can't fix-death. Or money can't buy love or trust-these all things that come with life, like love you got to trust somebody to love them and death is just there. Dat's it for me Beat, I'm gone.

-Young Nuttso
From the Beat: We're sorry for all of your losses. It's a lot for a young person to have to deal with. You are left here with your life, and we hope you can spend time with those you love, and trust them, and explore your potential while your alive.

Bringing Back My Cousin

If I could bring back one person it would be my cousin Mike. Better yet I would try to prevent his death by being there and defusing the situation. Because I don't feel it was his time to go, and I believe he should still be here today. There's not too much to say besides I just wish he was still here today.

-Gmb
From The Beat: It is tragic to hear about so many needless deaths, particularly of young men like your cousin. Does his death make you look at your own life differently?

Just Before I Went To Sleep Last Night...

I thought about my cousin Kevin who died. He was purposely shot in the face. The guy who did it, for some reason they only gave him 21 years and charged him with aggravated assault.

How do you cold bloodedly kill a man and only get 21 years? I believe that's not right. Have you ever lost a loved one and didn't get justice? If you would, please share with us.

-April
From The Beat: It must be so frustrating to feel like you're not getting the justice you need. On the flip side though, we also read a lot of writings from people who feel their sentencing was much too harsh for what they did. Why do you think these discrepancies exist? Is the system all lopsided, or are there two sides to every story?

Choices

If I were my parents I wouldn't change nothing about them because my parents are good parents they taught me all the things I should know and do.

I'm Tongan so my culture is very strong with obeying our parents and disciplining our kids whenever they do something very bad.

My parents are very loving people and they always try to tell me to stay out of trouble but it's just me that messes up and not listens to them all the time. My parents deal with me like they're supposed to but it's just me making the wrong choices in life.

-Vaikele
From the Beat: It's good you have their support while you learn about why it matters to you to make the choices you do. You are young, you are learning, you have time to re-organize your life.

RIP To My Cuttie

Oh yea, rest in peace to my cuttie who I had love for that ninja didn't have to go so rest in peace my ninja lil' solo so guess what rest in peace.

-Momo
From the Beat: We are sorry for your loss. Can you write him a letter that tells him how you thought and felt about him, and anything else you wish you could say? What would he say to you now, if he could?

What Money Can't Fix

Well it can't fix your hate or your feelings, but it can help you take your mind off of it for a little while, well at least me because I like sometimes love it. Because I can do so much with it, like new shoes or a watch or two. It also can't buy a family in lest they are one of these people who only people who don't want to be wit you unless you have something they want.

You also can't buy feelings unless it's mine because you can make me happy or mad because I always want more in me.

-Yvette
From The Beat: You're absolutely right, money can be a really great distraction from troubles. Retail therapy is extremely common, but a few days later we all end up the same - still upset and broke.

Bring Back The Dead

If I can bring back someone who died I would bring my sister Ronda. I would've said I love you for the last time. The last time I seen her she just got off life-support. She just had a heart transplant because she was born with a bad heart. It was them punk ass doctors' fault. They gave her a high dose of medicine that made her sick so they lowered her dosage too much and she got very sick and she went to the hospital and her heart stopped pumping and she passed. When I heard the bad news I punched the wall and dropped in tears. I was 11 years old - it was 2004.

Ronda was the peace keeper - she kept the whole family together. She was 14 when she died. When she left there was a black hole in my brother Maurice's and my hearts. After that, I started not giving a f***. I started going bad. I started not caring and that's when I got expelled from school for various beatings. I was fighting all the time. If anybody said the wrong thing I'd jump on their heads. Ronda's death messed me up. I am never going to forget about her. I love her, and if you say anything bad it's your ass you gone toe tag.

-Tavio
From The Beat: It must've been so hard for you to lose your sister. It's really common for people to get very angry when they're sad or miss someone. Sounds like you're pretty aware of why you act the way you do, so the next step is to work on that - find ways to work through the times you feel angry without involving other people. Maybe try going for a run or punching a pillow to get out your feelings of anger.

If I Was Moms

If I was moms I wouldn't have tried so hard. If my moms wouldn't have tried so hard to keep me from doing the things I knew I shouldn't have been doing I wouldn't have started doing them.

I realize now me and only me is the one who has to take responsibility for my actions.

-Profit Means Money
From the Beat: Hmm most writers say their Moms should have been more strict with them. It sounds like you felt like rebelling against what your Moms wanted. Maybe it's the independence you need to take responsibility for yourself. With independence and responsibility maybe you can have a better relationship with your Mom too.

I would not be here if my Primo was still Here

If I could bring back my cousin none of this shhh would be happening with my life. Since my cousin passed away this life has been so damn hard for me.

I know if he was still by my side he would say hey be safe always keep your head up and don't let nada put you down. We would be side by side and if I could bring my primo back we would live La' Vida Loca.

We would both go down if that was meant to happen. He would say keep your head up.

-Trigger
From the Beat: We are sorry for your loss. You say that Primo would have told you to be safe. How can you be safe AND live la vida loca?

Bringing Back the Dead

If I had a chance to bring my grandma and Damarion back my whole life would change just like that. To tell my big bra when to hang with me that night if I had these two people in my life then it would be alright. I would give my life to bring them both back. Give my last breath to the ones I love and fly to the sky peaceful as a dove, or to just give up everything to go up above with the two people I love.

-Lil' Dizil
From The Beat: Clearly you cared very strongly for these two people. What was it about them that you loved so much? Was it the impact they had on you, or just a strong connection, or something else?

My Family

Just before I went to sleep last night, I thought about all my family because I miss them all really bad. The reason that I think about them is because they mean the world to me. I can't live without them. I feel like I am dying without them so I really need them really bad. Especially my little sister.

-Rigoberto
From the Beat: Have you let them know how much you realize they mean to you? How do your feelings about your family influence your plans for your future, what you will and will not do?

If I Can

If I can bring back the dead, I would go back to March, 2004. I would prevent my only uncle named Darius and I would tell him I love him and I'll see you when it's my time to go and before he would've left me I would ask him how can I stay out of jail.

-Fred
From the Beat: It's been some years and you still clearly carry his memory close. What do you imagine he would tell you (if he could) about how you can stay out of jail?

Bringing Back My Grandmother

I would bring back my grandmother because I never told her about how much I appreciate what she done for me and how much she inspired me to do positive things. I wish she would come back to life and lead me the way she used to. And because of her I'm going to show her that I can graduate high school and go to Mills College like I told her when I was a little girl. I want her to come back for her to say she loves me one more time and for me to get the chance to say I love her also.

-Lite Brite
From The Beat: We're so sorry you lost someone who was such a positive force in your life. Working hard towards the goals you wrote about is a great way to honor your grandmother's memory.

Friends

Sometimes it's hard to tell who is your real friend or not a real friend because a real friend will be there for you, and a not real friend will say things to make you think that he is your real friend. But when it comes down to it, they are not there for you.

-Devante
From the Beat: Yes there are certain things people need to do to really earn our trust. Words need to be back up with their actions.

How It will Feel

Just before I went to sleep last night I was thinking about when are they going to come get me for court.

I was also thinking about how will it feel to be in college and own my own company.

And I always think about when will I start my family and how will it feel to have my own son, daughter, or both that is what I think about every night before I go to sleep.

-Tay
From the Beat: We believe that thinking about how you'll feel when you are in the middle of creating what you want most is inspiring, and will help you make the decisions you need to, to get there!

Change My Ways

I wish my homie Casper and Spanky were still alive. They both got killed and they lost their lives to gang violence. I just want to tell them I love them and they would tell me to do good in life and that's what I want to do just change my ways when I get out with my girl.

Money cant fix true love cause I'm not rich and my girl loves me and I love her and that's that.

As a parent I would do the same my mother does but a li'l stricter and I love her.

-Arturo
From the Beat: How exactly do you plan to change your ways? It sounds like you know what's most important to you, so keep focused on that so you can make decisions that keep you with the people you love.

Bringing Back Emmit

If I could bring somebody back I would bring my bra Emmit. I would tell bra not to get in that car and just stay at home.

If my bra was here with me I know I would not be in jail and I would be in school wit a life and if I could say one thing I would say I love you bra.

-Lil' Chuck
From the Beat: We are sorry for your loss of your Emmit, he sounds like a powerful person in your life. Could you think that in a way he is with you, always? We understand you miss the man, but could you let his spirit be a good motivating influence on your life. It sounds like he would want you to have a good life, to take care of yourself.

If I Was a Parent

If I was a parent I would let my children do stuff they like to do but not anything but what they deserve. But I would be on their backs because I want them to be the best they can and don't be on drugs and that negative stuff. Getting out of the Juvenile Hall and what can I do to avoid coming back. Also what can I do to keep myself from getting involved in other things that I'm not supposed to do.

-Delazo
From The Beat: Have the ways you've been raised differ from what you would want to do with your child? Do you think that how we parent determines how children turn out, or is it up to them?

Me and Money

What's up Beat? I'm gonna be talking about me and money. Me and money get along real well. Money is a big plus. What would we do without money? Me, I come across money all day everyday, ya dig? Because what I'm a millionaire gangsta. But most people call me young money because I'm a young stunta. There's nothing I can't get my hands on.

Everything on the streets: cars, guns, dope, you name it, I had it. But like I was saying, I done touched 50,000, 25,000, 10,000. Basically all this shhh.

I'm gonna wrap this up. I'm out. See you next time. Love all ya. See you on the outs. Back to that money, ya dig?

- Lil' Twin
From The Beat: Twin, we still are wondering what all that money can't buy. In fact, in this piece you never really say what money does for you. Why is it so important to you? We don't know why you are inside but we also wonder if your "coming across money all day long" has something to do with it. So, is it worth it?

If you were your parent

I wouldn't want to be my own parent because now that I look at it, back then I didn't know some of the things I know now. If I was my own parent I would end up in a worse position than I am now or end up dead because they didn't let me go outside when bad things happen and I'm happy I wasn't able to come outside, that's why I wouldn't want to be my own parent.

-Lil' Charles
From The Beat: Being the disciplinarian is never fun, and lots of people avoid setting strict rules when they can. Most people don't like to set rules because they think it will worsen the relationship, but most times setting limits is a good thing, and when given limits most young people respond to them and even eventually respect them.

Dreaming about Marriage

Just before I went to sleep last night, I thought about my boo Mike! I miss him so much. I dreamed about us getting married in Trinidad, us having at least 7 kids including his 3 and living in Detroit, Michigan in a mansion near the beach.

I imagine us in the after life together whether it's heaven or hell it really wouldn't matter as long as I'm with him. Looking into his light deep brown eyes, smellin' his sweet strong cologne. Kissing him, midnight light shines on us feeling his touch makes me weak. When he looks in my eyes, I'm speechless.

I cant speak. I love him with all my heart and I promise I will be with him till death does its part!

-D'Aujenique
From The Beat: It's good to have romantic dreams, but in the meantime, what about your real life plans? School. Work, staying out of trouble? It seems like taking on three other children might be a heavy load, especially when you are just stepping into adulthood yourself!

I Am 15 and Life is Short

The hall is not cool. I got to go to sleep when they tell me to, I got to eat when they tell me to. This shhh ain't cool.

I been here four times for stupid stuff man, but when I go home this time I am going to do good. I don't want to come here no more for some stupid shhh no more. When I got home I'm gon' go to school and do my work.

Shhh I am fifteen and life is short.

-Donte
From The Beat: You're right - life is short, why waste it on lockdown? What are some of the people/things you will have to avoid to be successful when you get out?

Doing me Song

When I was young
I was never doing me
When I got younger
I started definitely doing me
And now I see
I love wearing fancy clothes and jewelry
Everyday I wake up
Got to really go blow some trees
And got have a new weave or braids
In my hair freshly done
With my nails and eyebrows arched to
I am so true
I always got to do me
Till the day I die till the day I die
A ride or die chick
Yes I am
And I always got to stay fly
Doing me
The best way I can
Always got to stay fly doing me
The best way I can
Always got stay fly doing me
The best way I can
Always got to stay doing me
I pray every night before I go to bed
I thank God
That I'm still breathing air
I pray every night also to
Down on my knees
For my hater's to
Because I got to always thank
For my blessing yea to
I love doing me
Walking down the street
I love doing me shopping ka-ching ka-ching
I love doing me when I party like a rock star
And nobody can bring down
When I'm shining like a rock star
Twinkle

-Karmeisha
From The Beat: We hope you keep doing you - the real you underneath the BS that peer pressure feeds you, or the BS that says people are what they wear, or the BS that makes you think you need to party like a rock star to BE a rock star. Peace, and keep shining from inside!

Joy

Joy
Joy is not a boy
Joy is not a toy
Joy is a great feeling that I feel In my heart
I even feel joy when we are apart
feel joy from the start
Joy when I saw my baby sister for the first time
She filled me with so much wonder that I can truly shine
Joy when she smiled at me, holding her set me free
She is only five months old she will grow to be strong and bold.
She is my baby sister and I will protect her
When she is by my side
She bring me so much pride
I will teach her everything that I know
Thiis poem is not for show
I will love her with all my heart I have loved her from the start

-Rakkara
From The Beat: What a heartfelt poem! Just imagine how much she will love you and look up to you. When do you next see her? Who else takes care of her? When you get out, stay out, your baby sis needs you!

I Would Bring Back My Father

If I could bring back the dead I would brink back my father.
I never met him and never saw any pictures. He died when I was one. I just think that if I had a father figure my life would be different.

-Rish

From The Beat: Do you have other males in your life who take on that role, of being people you can look up to? We are sorry you lost your father, but we hope there are other people who inspire you to do your best.

What Money Can't Fix

Hey it's me Serg just chilling in Max 2. Money can't fix everything. It cannot bring back the dead. I wish I could I really do, I miss a bunch of my friends. I hate that they're gone. It's really hard on me. I don't like this feeling so rip all my dead friends. I'll see you in Heaven soon.

-Sergio

From the Beat: Aside from wanting to lick it with you too, do you think your friends would want you in heaven soon? What do you think they'd want you to do with your life? They lost theirs, and you say you hate that they're gone. How can you become the man you can be?

Money Can't Bring Back My Folks

Money can't fix things like bringing some of my folks back and taking things back that already have been done. If money could fix one thing and one thing only I will bring my ninjas back to life and make sure it don't happen no more.

-A

From The Beat: We're sorry for all the people you've lost... but remember, even if you can't fix the past, there's a lot you can do to fix your future... What would you need to change about your own life to make it less dangerous?

What Can Fix a Broken Heart?

They can't fix a broken heart. If you're in love and your love has just came to an end um...yeah you can go shopping, get a new hairdo get your nails and feet done, etc..

Go out and hang with your friends and try to get it off your mind but it doesn't work. You go out and buy a new car but that's still not enough to cover the pain.... so I guess money can't fix everything.

-Raven

From The Beat: It sounds like you've been through this yourself. And yes, the only thing that can heal a broken heart is time, lots of it. And when the first pain hits you, it feels like nothing will ever take away the pain, but then, gradually, it starts to fade. Have you noticed that too?

If You Were Your Parent

Well if I was my own parent I would just try to make me change because my parents do everything possible to get me to stay out of trouble. But still like it's my fault because I'm the one to sneak out and still disobey. And I do have a child on the way so I hope I correct him and show him/her all my mistakes that I've done and the one I'm in right about now.

-Gerardo

From The Beat: We hope when you get out you can manage to stay out and be there to teach your child the lessons you've learned in your life. Thinking ahead, if you your child started down the path you're in right now, what do you think you could do to get them straight? What could someone do for you now?

Summer Love

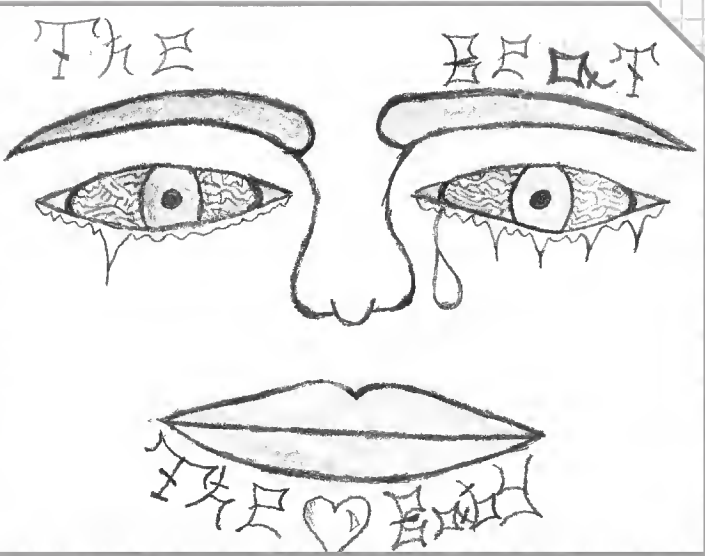
My love for you is like a river
A summer breeze that makes my soul shiver
One look from you is more precious than gold
You're the one I love to hold
I'm looking for tha' one
And you're the one I chose.

This is a poem I wrote for my ex-girlfriend. She was and is the love of my life. Me and her went against the world. We had the whole world against us. Our story is a Romeo and Juliet story. Our families hated each other, but we both snuck on trains to see each other. See she's from Sacramento, I'm from Oakland. Her family is rich, and mines is poor. Me and her were going steady - I even proposed to her!

She got pregnant and I went to jail. Soon I found out she was having sex with other guys with my baby in her stomach. After that she got an abortion without me knowing and my world fell apart. After that I found out that it wasn't my baby. I wanted to break up with her but I couldn't. And I still haven't.

-Kevin

From The Beat: Love can be tragic. Maybe this is a question of both of you being too young to handle the relationship—because she has her own issues to deal with: Fidelity, relationships, her family, the loss of her baby, and of course you have to work on the behaviors and lifestyle that got you locked up. Maybe once you are both stronger as individuals, you might have a better chance of being a strong couple?



Bring Back My OG Patna

What's up Beat? I'm at camp now. As you know we get home visits, and the last time I was on a HV, my OG patna died on 2/07/09.

I haven't had a chance to talk to him because I've been locked down for a cool minute, and it just hurt me that he had to die because of violence and to die in front f his momma's house.

I wish I could bring back the dead or rewind time, but everything happens for a reason, because life is ninety percent how you take it and ten percent what you make it, but it's one more thing -- I wanted to tell him I love him. Rest in Peace.

-Lil' E

From The Beat: We are so sorry for your loss. When you share your pain and memories of him, that helps keeping his death from becoming a statistic. Now you have to continue to live, and live right in his name!

How Can I Get Paid?

Just before I went to sleep last night, I thought about getting my freedom and then getting my dough. I stayed up hella long tryna figure out how I was gone accomplish my goal of getting paid. After thinking for a few, I got mad and went to sleep.

-No Name

From The Beat: While you went to sleep thinking about how to get paid, the people running the system went to bed satisfied that you are helping them get paid. You need to plan for a different goal: finishing school, getting off paper, and then getting a job so you can stack your chips a little at a time.

Just Before I Went To Sleep

Just before I went to sleep last night I thought about my baby mama and how much I miss her. I could be with her right now, but instead I'm locked up wishing I was with her. But that's all I got for The Beat.

-Young J

From The Beat: This is a pretty lazy response to our question... just three sentences! If you want to be with your bm and not just wish you were with her, what do you plan to change? If the answer is nothing, then you'll just keep dreaming about what you've lost...

When Does It End?

What's up, Beat? This ya boy, Isaiah, you know, still locked up. Man, when does it end? When I get out? Man, I'm tired of sleeping days and nights on people' clothes and bedding. Been here almost five months, doing dead time, but we'll see this week.

-Isaiah

From The Beat: Five months is a long time, but maybe it's what you needed so that you don't have to waste any more time under the control of strangers. When you're back to wearing your own clothes and sleeping in your own bed, don't give it up again! When you decide it's over, that's when it will end.

Bringing Back The Dead

If I could have one chance to bring somebody from the dead, I would bring my lil' homie Trivi back home. We used to go to school together. And I know he always got my back.

It was the 6/16/07 at 8:00 p.m. when the phone rings. I answer. It was my homie Cesar to tell me that my lil' homie Trivi got shot. When I heard that, I got so mad that I hit the wall so hard.

-Yandy

From The Beat: We're very sorry to read about this tragedy, just as we hate to read about these premature deaths every week. We can understand the anger that leads to hitting the wall, but are there other things you want to do — or want to stop doing — because of this experience?

What's Good With The Beat

It's yo' Boi Acie up in the max, and doing too much of nothing. But all you ninjas talking about y'all goons, y'all don't even know what a goon is homie. Real Goons don't talk, real goons shoot.

I'm a goon, boy. Me and my ninjas are goons for a reason 'cause we don't play. But ninjas out there really telling on ninjas. Ey, yo, people can be them peoples, no glasses can help you see them people.

All y'all boys out there got a lot of squares and your circles. That's why y'all dropping like flies. Put this in the Beat or I'm never writing for the Beat.

-Boi Acie

From The Beat: We're putting it in, but we don't think it says very much. When you say you "don't play," what is it that you don't play? You must have been playing something, or you wouldn't be in this place. What are we missing?



Bringing Back The Dead

Man, what's good with The Beat? This ya boy D-Boom posted up in the max right now. But man, bringing back the dead...

Fo' real man, if I could bring back the dead I would bring back the homies Nail Boom and O.G. fo' real, man. One thing I would want ma bra O.G. to tell me is who... 'cause if I ever find out... Really can't say what I'll do fo' real, 'cause that's my bra and I miss my big bruh hella much.

But fo' real, me and O.G. and Nail Boom:

Just ride and laugh at these slick ol' cowards.

Park at the top of the 'je'ts and just smoke and just talk fo' hours.

Show how after they dead, people lose their power.

Show Nail Boom how his trifling ol' baby mama done got wilder.

Now she messin' with the brother he robbed in the pink Impala.

But I miss ma bra to death fo' real. It seen like it was just

yesterday we was all just on the block posted, smokin', gettin' money. Now ma big bras gone. But it's good 'cause they say everything happens for a reason. We gone all meet each other one day. Till we meet again...

-Daddy-O

From The Beat: If they could come back and speak to you here, what do you think they would say? Do you think they miss being alive on earth... and wonder if they should have done anything different that could have kept them alive?

On My Way Out Of State

What's good with The Beat? This Drew, man, comin' out this unit. I been up in here for five months. The way it's lookin', I might be up in here for like a minute mo'. My PO and shhh be on some other shhh, actin' like she ain't givin' a damn about if I leave or not.

It's nothing, though. I'm finta just be chillin up here till they send me to the "zoneski" aka Arizona. But other than that, I'll holla at The Beat next week.

-Drewski

From The Beat: What program are you going to in Arizona? What do you hope to learn there?

Thinking Of My Son...

My son, I've been locked up for about a week in 850 Bryant, and they brought me to juvy yesterday. I've missed my son for what seem like eternity, and it's only been a week and a couple of days.

My son is my heart, my soul, my everything. My son is who I think about all day and before I go to sleep. I also thought about the two women I love to death in this world, and that is my moms and my wife.

True story kid! Wake up!

-Nicoya

From The Beat: We assume that last bit of advice, "Wake up!" is to yourself, and it's the right advice to give. It's clear how much you love and need your son. Just think how much more he needs you!

Untitled

Just before I went to sleep last night, I thought about someone special to me. I miss her dearly. I wish I was makin' love to her— since I can't be my explicit self in this Beat. That's the only thing I regret about comin' here is leaving her, but hey, that's how life is.

I was thinking about being wit' her and the things we go to when I get out. Since I have big thoughts I also thought about being wit' my ninjas and fam. Thoughts of how I'ma get this money always cross my mind. The last thought be is takin' care of unfinished business, know what I'm talking 'bout.

-Rambo Rob

From The Beat: We think you need to put these thoughts in some order, because some of them cancel out others. If you're plotting to "take care of unfinished business," it's like planning to come back to a place like this and have to regret, al over again, leaving her behind. Being responsible often means having to give up something in order to get something else. Only a child thinks he can have it all.

Gettin' Older

Man, each and every day I spend in this facility, I notice how the older kids act younger... But me, on the other hand, I've done seen a whole lot of stuff and been through too much to not act my age, 17.

I'm doing my down-low, keeping my head out the gutter, but doing my best to function in a junction like this. But yup, I'm older... 'Bout ta be 18 in a few months. Life is short. I'm tryna be out with my family and do my down-low, you feel me...

I'm finsta be out in a few on some otha, in like mainey. I'm ahead of the police's brains you feel me, ya'msayin? Holla....

-Jabba

From The Beat: Well, if you're so far ahead of the police's brains, how did you let them nab you this time? Maybe you mean that being in here has made you see what you have to stop doing so that you can stay free. That would really put you ahead! Don't mess up now. Keep your eyes on that prize: getting out to be with your family!

Why I'm Waiting To Change

Wha's up wit' it? Well, I'm just goin' answer yo questions 'bout the last time I wrote. You asked why wait till I'm 18 to stop this stuff I do.

Well, first is 'cause I'm only16 still, and I still like doing the stuff I do. I know I'ma stop robbin' ninjas when I turn 18 'cause I'ma get more mature an' stuff. Like right now I stopped doin stuff I used o do in middle schoo' 'cause I think it's stupid. So I think it goin' go the same when I turn 18.

- Jerry Geez

From The Beat: What if the things your doing now get you in a worse situation than you're in? What if you don't make it until your 18? What if you get caught up in something you didn't expect, and you get tried as an adult and face real time, or catch a bullet and end up in a wheelchair with someone having to feed you? Those are the "what ifs" that you'll regret all your life if you don't change now while it's still possible.

What I Thought About Before Bed

Just before I went to sleep last night, I thought about all the thangs I'ma do when get out: Late night creepin'; pull phat licks and get my cake up. Plot an' scheme to get green. After all that keep it solid and get back to business. Be on one, make things happen. Been down for too long. The street callin' on me, lil' dawg.

-Taliban

From The Beat: Apparently you haven't been down long enough since everything you're thinking about doing will only lead you back to the same place. The only green you're making now is going into the pockets of the people you have handed your life over to.

My Smile

My smile turned into a mug
My bra died and I ended up on the inside
An' that's how shells ended up inside me
Lil' dawg turned grimy
We all see the same moon, dance to the same beat
But go out and kill each other
But if I don't die I promise revenge

-Vnk

From The Beat: That revenge you promise will only make your own life worse (more voluntary slavery), as well as make another mother's heart break. We're sorry you've experienced the pain you now want to inflict on someone else's loved ones.

More Money, More Problems

More money, more problems. Having money is good, but too much can give you problems. Money can break up family. Money can make you lose your good friend. I got too much problem to think, so I can't write that much right now. Late.

-Free Me

From The Beat: We wish you had included some examples of what you mean. How can money break up family? How can it cause you to lose a good friend? Have you had these experiences with money? This could be a much stronger piece if you told us about some of them.

Money Every Day

I need money every day... hustle, survive all day. I need money. Getting money on the block, that's what I'm about — busta choppa every day. You know how I do, getting money every day boy I see dolla's all day getting money is my top dollar

-Omar

From The Beat: Yeah, we can see how much money you're getting. Of course, it's not going into your pockets, but into the pockets of your keepers. Very smart!

What I though About

What's up Beat? This ya boy Lil' Bra. Just before I went to sleep last night I thought about changing my life. I want to be able to go to my group home and complete it successfully. I know me, I am going to run but I will try in all my power to stick it out so I can get out the system and get off probation.

-Lil' Bra

From The Beat: Maybe it's only the old you that you know, the one that would have run from the group. Maybe the "new" you has matured enough to realize that sometimes we just have to take our medicine and put the sickness behind us to move forward. Even if you hate the group home, you can be man enough to stick it out and prove what you are capable of accomplishing!

Had A Name From The Beginning

What's up with that city beef? It's hard living in a city where everybody from somewhere. A place where you got to kill or be killed. A place where young thugs from 12 and up busting heads just to make a name for theirself instead of being themselves.

Me Twaney Mac, top rank because boy been doing this shhh since it started. Never had to make a name for myself, already had one since the first day mom's found out she was pregnant. I been out here.

I ain't going anywhere unless god want me to. I'm going to holla lata man. Gotta get back to doing this time for crime.

-Twaney

From The Beat: Maybe god put you in the situation your in to show you this isn't where you should be. Do you have any control over where you are or what you are doing? Does god have any expectations of you?

Bring Him Back

If I could, I would bring my boo back
He was everything to me, and had his life intact.
I miss him so much, and wish his death wasn't a fact
He helped and persuaded me to keep my life on track
We was down for each other, there was no mistakin' that
He was like an answer to my prayers, truly heaven sent
He treated me like a queen, made sure I had everything
No man could ever take his place... I was truly sprung
I hit the notes higher than T-Pain sung
I feel it in my heart, and I knew he was the one
RIP, Reashawn

-Kirstin

From The Beat: We hate reading these pieces about tragic death among those as young as you! We're sorry he's gone, and wonder what his death has meant to you and how you live your life. Has it made you think about things any differently?

Living By Quotes

I live my life off of quotes like these:
"Quitting while your ahead is not the same as quitting."
(I just don't know why;
I didn't listen to this one.)
"If a man stands for nothing, he will fall for anything..."
"If there is no struggle, then there is no success..."
"What doesn't kill you will only make you stronger."
The one I like the most: "Every man is trying to live up to his father's expectations."

-Dow Jones

From The Beat: You could take any one of these quotes, and write a complete piece about it. What attracts you to it? What examples can you give to prove the quotes true (or false)? Without knowing why you choose to believe these particular quotes, there's not much for us to comment on.

If I Can Bring Him Back

If I can bring my big cousin back, man, I'm telling you, I will be so different. They ask me if I would be different if he was alive, and to tell you the truth, I would. I won't be here right now, writing this. I will be somewhere mobbin' with my big cousin.

Cousin, it seem since you been gone, shhh been getting rough out here for me. Man, I miss you sooo much. But I'm go hold my head up, and a part of you still live in me 'til this day.

-Lay-Lay

From The Beat: We appreciate that you want to live, at least partly, to give him life through you. But we hope you make some other changes in the way you live so that you can carry him into freedom. If you and he were out there "mobbin," how long do you think it would last before you paid the terrible price he's already paid, or the terrible price you're now paying?

About To Be A Father At Fifteen

If I was a virgin, would life be the same now? I would not have a child an' the females would not probably love me the same. I think about hell, 'cause I know I'll probably never change. Like Jata said, I'm just a gangster caught up in the game. Things will never change.

Sex is a stress relief to me. I need it or I might go crazy, but with sex comes a hard consequence... by that I mean kids. I'm gonna have my first child at fifteen. Damn, that's a shame. My life I think will change. So you answer my question for me. If I was a virgin, would life be the same?

-Free Ya'self

From The Beat: There is no reason why having sex should lead to children, unless you're act irresponsibly, like a child yourself. By having unprotected sex, you not only bring an unplanned child into the world when you're still a child yourself, but you also leave yourself open to all manner of STDs, from gonorrhea to AIDs. You don't have to be a virgin to be responsible.

Goom To These Streets

Man, what's up? I'm writing on the topic today, "Bringing Back The Dead." Tell you the truth, I'd bring back a couple of people: 1) my grandparents and dad; 2) brothers; 3) homies. The reason why I go back in time an' bring them back, because I would want them to know the things that I didn't get a chance to tell them before, like the secrets that I kept from them.

You asked if I would be different. Yes, actually, I would be different. To be truthful, I be a school/church girl. I wouldn't have lost my "V card," just hella little shhh. I wouldn't be hanging on nobody' block. I will really be different.

I don't know by what you mean, would I still be here? I mean, I wouldn't be locked up and shhh, so, yeah, I be hitting corners with the fam bam, ya dig? But, for real, I would really just want them to know I love them, feel me? I'm goom to these streets, feel me? They life is still living through me, regardless. These sucka-ass ninjas know what's up, and I dare any one of them to run up and take another one from me, 'cause I be damn if I let them still be on these streets. I'm goom for life. We ain't going to stop 'til the clock stop ticking. Tick, tick, tick, get ya rest. We out here, man. RIP to my fam bam.

-Queen Bri

From The Beat: We're always sorry to read about the number of losses people your age have already experienced. It shouldn't be that way. We hope you've learned enough from these tragedies to avoid them yourself. As for what lies ahead, no one can predict the future, so you can't convince us that you won't stop doing what you do and start doing something new. Only time will tell.

Can't Take My Heart Out The Streets

Money can't fix my love for the block. It can't bring back the big homies that was took out. Money can't stop makin' me live a savage life. Money won't make me quit mobbin'. It can't take my heart out the streets. Thanks to money, my life was neva a struggle. Money can't fix a lot, but I love it, and so do the money lovers of my 'hood.

-Shar Goola

From The Beat: Your heart may still be out there in the streets, but the rest of you is locked up behind walls, and you're having to do what a bunch of strangers tell you to do. We hope you see how much bigger the world is than your tiny block... while you still have a chance!

Can't Stop My Grind

Yeah man, what's up with The Beat? They in here tryna play ya boy in this thang man. They got me in here in the big boy in unit. You know ya boy Young Vern in here holdin' it down for the homies.

Man, ninjas ain't in this thang talkin' 'bout shhh, ya'msayin? When I get out this thang, I'ma go get a job. Man, ya know I got to get my stack up, you know how I do. Ninjas try to hate, but can't stop my grind.

-Young Vernon

From The Beat: Forget about those "ninjas" that can't stop your grind. The system has stopped your grind more than once, and if you keep giving them all the power they need to control your life, they'll keep stopping it! Seems like, by now, it's time for you to flip the script a little, and regain control of your life!

I Need My Mom

If I could bring the dead back, I'll bring back my mom, 'cause how I grew up is manie (bad!). That's why I'm like this. I feel like I was raised by nothing but boys, so I'm rough with people, plus myself. So I really need motherhood?

-Iyana

From The Beat: It's too bad you had to grow up without a mother, leaving you as rough as a boy. Can you soften up some of those rough edges so that the world treats you with a little tenderness?

Not A Good Place

Just before I went to sleep last night, I thought about getting out of this place. I'm tired of being in this G thang. It's not a game in this thang. I need to get out this place and get back to my family. This is not a good place to be and grow up in.

-Jb

From The Beat: You're so right, JB, this is not a good place to grow up in. And you will get out and be home. But then what? That's what we'd like to read... your plans for how to stay out once you get out.

My Mom Is My Ride Or Die

My mom is my ride or die
She is my everything
She is by my side
And she love me so much
And I love her, too
So my mom is my ride or die
I will be with her for life
I love you, Mom
You see it

-Jalissa

From The Beat: Before you can be with her for life, you have to give up a few things — the things that let the system take you away from her! Think of all that she has given up for you, and maybe that will make it easier for you to give up a few things for her.

It's A New Year

What up with The Beat? This to the young homies. Man, y'all be cool 'cause they ain't playin' out there no more. It's '09 and the police already angry 'cause it's a black president and they very angry. Y'all need to keep y'all head up 'cause people getting killed like animals in Africa when the tribe hungry.

-Lil' Cali

From The Beat: Do you think all the police are angry that we now have a black president? Does that include black and brown police, too? Seems like relations on the street were bad with the cops and y'all long before we got a black president, so what do you plan to do in your own life to stay out of harm's way?

Love To The Fallen

Something money can't fix is bringing back my dead homies so I can tell them I love them and how much I miss them. So I'm go do it now. I love y'all homies who are fallen. Y'all gone but never forgotten.

-Low Boi Acie

From The Beat: Sorry, but we can't put down a list of RlPs like you wrote. We're sorry your list is so long. Do you think about what you have to do to stay off this list?

You Ain't Scarin' Nothin'

Man, I'm gettin' tired of these clowns up in here, y'am sayin'? They all 'bout talk, but neva do nothing but run they choppas. They need to be smooth, befo' it get ugly in this G-thang. I'm holdin' it down, y'am sayin'? I stay with the thugs on the outs, but all the goons, keep ya heads up and be smooth, y'am sayin'? This that real ninja.

-Grimey

From The Beat: Why should these "clowns" take advice from someone who gave away his freedom to a bunch of strangers? As long as you're wearing someone else's drawers, it doesn't much matter whether you're that "real ninja" or not. Stop getting locked up, and then your advice will have more power.

Fallen Soldiers

Man, this topic could be a little bit more specific. But if I knew what I know today, I would be the grimeiest, smartest, smirkishes, richest young ninja alive, but had to learn from my mistakes. And man, if I could, I'a bring back all my block ninjas. But I can't, and I don't think they wanted to be in this world of evil and hate so much shameful pain anyway.

So, to all my fallen real ninjas, hold a spot for yo' young real ninja.

-Shawni B

From The Beat: What if you're wrong? What if they could come back and all tell you that they did want to be in this world? What if they told you that as bad as things are here, it's better than the alternative? Would that change anything about how you live your life or how you want to live it?

Stay In School

What that Beat do? This be that girl Creamy Luscious on deck in YGC. Yo' girl rep that town shhh all day. Well, anyways, yeah, yo' girl up here doing her dues, not givin' a damn about nobody. But, man, all I'm tryna do is get money, smoke weed, and do me. I love my Popi and my Popi loves me. What I got to say, stay in school and get yo' money up, youngsta.

-Creamy Luscious

From The Beat: You waited until the very end to give the only useful advice in this piece: stay in school. If you keep chasing that money, that weed and repping your street, the only education you're going to get is behind walls! Word to the wise!

Bossy And Freaky, But Never Too Naughty

Bossy, from head to toe
Freaky, but never really low
I play the game like Monopoly
I dare a girl to land on my property

-Iyana

From The Beat: Okay so you dare her to land on your property, and then what? Do you go straight to Jail without passing Go, without collecting your \$200?

My Jaina Left Me

Yeah man, my jaina left me. But y'all know what?! Broads come and go feel me! That's just part of la vida loca when you're incarcerated! You don't really know if your girl will hold you down once you're locked up. But to hell with it!

-Duende

From The Beat: If you put yourself in a place like this for any time at all, then it won't be broads that come and go. It'll just be other dudes!

Keep Tha Peace

I'm tryna keep that peace
My shih still ain't made The Beat
They tryna play me talkin' 'bout I'm talkin' 'bout tha beef
Man, I'm out; I'ma see y'all in week

-Man-Man

From The Beat: Some of your pieces are just too gangster to publish. But we can see your skills in a short poem like this, so we hope you write us something serious. That we would publish.

Just Before

Just before I went to sleep last night, I thought about what a dog was doing in the halls, when I could be home with my family that loves me and misses me. What am I doing in here in a small room and a cement bed, when I could be in a soft-ass bed at my house and at whatever time I want have a lot of freedom.

In my house I just never get bossed around. So when I was about to sleep I was thinking that if I just fell to sleep and I wish I could just wake and wake at my house the day I got caught, it would have been really different. I would have though twice about doing something wrong.

-Wrong

From The Beat: It would be nice if we could wake up with all the mistakes we made erased. But that can't happen, so all you can do is try to learn from the mistake, and not repeat it. If you stop doing the things you can get caught for, then you won't have to go to sleep wishing to wake up before it happened.

Bringing Back The Real Ninjas

God give me my ninja for about a month
So we could parlay and chill, talkin' ova a blunt!
Then find a few girls. Gone and spend it on him and get what he want.
Help him take care of his kids, make sure they on.
You never think about this shhh until a ninja gone.
And if that break me then forget it, I guess I'm on my own.
It would be lovely if heaven had a phone.
So instead I decided to write this song.

-Yung Dooda

From The Beat: If Heaven did have a phone, what do you think he would be telling you down here on earth? Would you be willing to hear his message if he asked you to do some changing so that you could have the opportunity he did not have to live out his full life?

25 Reasons To Love You

- 1) Your smile, don't have to say no more.
 - 2) Your guidance and all the things you show me
 - 3) The way you look at me when you say "I love you"
 - 4) Your headstrong personality
 - 5) Your take-charge capability
 - 6) I love the way you cook for me beef roast, white rice with gravy
 - 7,8,9) The flowers, the massages, the cards you give for no reason at all
 - 10) The way you spend on me even though I got my own money
 - 11) For always being yourself regardless of how I or anyone else felt
 - 12) The way you don't trip on me when I'm in it real late like right now
 - 13) Knowing just what I need even when I didn't make it clear for you to see
 - 14) For being understanding when that time comes, you know what I mean
 - 15) For your beauty, inside and out, and to close it out,
 - 16 through 25) is for all the females I cheated with, but you didn't leave because you had love for me
- Dedicated to someone very special to me.

-Lil' Junk

From The Beat: Sounds like you have someone worth respecting enough not to cheat on her. You don't want to find yourself in the position of wishing to change something you can't change and losing her.

Bringing Back My Homeys

If I can go back in time, I would change a lot of things. I would have stayed on page and protected my dog. But hey, God works in his own ways. So yeah, what would he had told me — to keep my head up and watch out for these punks. So yeah, I'm really not go say too much, but I always say at night I got you and I'm go keep yanking until the day I go.

-Coop

From The Beat: How do you think god is working, mysteriously, in your life? Could what happened to your homie be god's way of speaking to you to see if you're listening?

The Night I'll Always Remember

It was about 12:30 at night, just like any other night, except this night was not like any other. I was walking inside my house. I had just finished smoking a blunt when I got a phone call from my boy asking if I wanted to kick it. I said I had to take care of my kid, so I go upstairs. 30 minutes later, I'm by the window blowing the weed smoke out, when I heard six shots from a near distance. I thought to myself, "Damn! Another one dead."

I finish my blunt and I'm about to go to bed when I hear an ambulance pass my house, I think nothing of it and go to sleep. But that's not where it ends. I had a dream about me and my boy that called me. We were walking down the street when a man runs up to me with a bat, and before he can hit me, my boy pushes me out he way and gets hit. And right when he gets hit, I wake up to the sound of my cell phone.

Two days later, I found out that my boy was murdered two blocks from my house at one a.m. with six shots to his chest. RIP G-1

-Nothing But Time

From The Beat: We're so sorry that you've had to live through this nightmare. You're exactly right to think, "Damn! Another one dead." How many more, we wonder, until we lose an entire generation of young men who should have grown to manhood? Does this tragedy change anything for you about how you want to live your life?

I Love My Goons

Yeah, It's ya boy, Grimey, coming live and direct from YGC. 'Bouta get up outta here in a min. Yeah, but I love my goons, 'cause they like family to me. But, yeah, I'm be out there, doin' my thang. I got to get dough, y'am sayin'? That's what it's all about, y'am sayin'? We in this unit deep. I wish I was out fo' my goons right now. Police still out there tryin' to do they thang, but, hey, it's nothin' to a big dog, but get at me.

-Grimey

From The Beat: As long as being a slave is “nothin” to you, you’ll just keep putting money in the pockets of the people who are now controlling you. When your life, and every second in it becomes “something,” then maybe you’ll realize that you could be in control instead of a bunch of strangers!

In My Mind

I know ninjas that know ninjas that beef wit' ninjas that ain't 'bout shhh, ya dig? I got a lot of ninjas confused right now, 'cause this is how I think. If I spoke how I thought, it'll be somethin' like this:

“That ninjas ova there can't underdig what ninja on this pencil be talkin' 'bout, 'cause that ninja can't see this ninja, 'cause this ninja got that swag an' he can't swag like I swag, 'cause I be swaggin' like me, an' him ain't me, ya dig? If you can't keep up, you gone get left on some Bayonce shhh. So stay away from that 40, 'cause drivin' while drunk'll get ah ninja slumped. That me, though, but I gotta put stuff in English and y'all prolly go crazy.

-Young Dunny

From The Beat: We had to take out a few lines, partly because we don't want to promote gunplay in The Beat and partly because when we don't know what something means, we have to be extra careful. The system is looking over our shoulder, so if you want to say something, we wish you'd write it plainly so we're not tempted to remove it. The sad truth about both you and those who don't have your swag is that you're both trying to make the best of it without having the freedom to do so. Seems to us that you're in the same boat, whether you swag or not!

What Money Can't Fix

Money can't change the fact that the homie's dead and gone. Money can't change the fact that some ninjas gone drop in 2009. Certain things money ain't useful for, things you can't change.

If I could change something, it would be all these so-called gangsters, thugs, or goons, whateva y'all call yo'self. I would help these ninjas get some courage and be about what y'all talkin' 'bout. It ain't smooth to be a gangster in The Beat, ya'msayin'? These drugs got y'all thinkin' y'all me or my squad? Y'all clowns.

-The Shotty Ninja

From The Beat: Real gangsters? So-called gangsters? Who cares? Both you and those criticize as clowns are locked up, slaves to a system that had no power to enslave them until you gave it to them! Real or fake, freedom beats slavery any day of the week!

Don't Play Games

Ya dig, this the Shotty Ninja. Wha's poppin' with The Beat thang, ya heard? Ey, this a lil' something I been tellin' ninjas. It go somethin' like this: I'm posted on the block in a black hoody. Don't get it confused, ain't nothin' I say, play or games, so please don't play with me like I'm PS3 or X-Box 360, 'cause I ain't got the patience. Coming live and direct, put ya glasses on, ya dig?

-The Shotty Ninja

From The Beat: This doesn't reveal very much more than, “don't play with me.” What happens when you lose your patience? When do you plan to stop letting the system play with you by putting yourself in situations that give it power over you?

Missing My Homies

If I could bring my deceased soldiers back, it'll be a rap. You boys know what it is. But I miss all my dead homies and my loved ones with all my heart. But, che, this Yung Von and RIP to all the homies I have lost. I'm gone.

-Yung Von

From The Beat: We're sorry your list of the dead is so long, Yung Von, and we're sorry we can't just list them the way you put them down. We don't do lists of RIPs, but if you want to write about one or more of them, we'd publish that.

What I Was Thinking Last Night

Shhh homie, I was thinkin' 'bout this bad-ass female last night. But I didn't do no nasty shhh or anything, nothin' like that, though. I was thinking how beautiful she is.

Females is one of the most important things in the world. Without them our population would be low, probably wouldn't even be a population to count, you heard. An' plus, a ninja would go crazy without a female, pro'ly mo' than money

But money is sweet , too. Shhh, I love that shhh, but you can get money. Well, I can get money, and I most definitely get females. I'm just sayin' females should be treated like the beautiful queen that they are. So ta all the females I ever disrespected, I'm a say “my bad,” 'cause I don't say sorry... Adios.

-Cannon

From The Beat: We're sorry you don't say sorry 'cause sometimes sorry is the most appropriate word to say. Money is something we all need, but to love it may create problems. (That's why the Bible says “The love of money is the root of all evil.”) As for the love of females, well, that's the kind of love you can only experience if you get out of places like this and stay out of places like this. No question about it, being around only boys for a long time can truly make you crazy!

Trifling

Man, listen up. I'ma about to get dope
Man, I'm tired of these dumb ninjas in here
But anywho, man, I was reading the Bible
And some shhh god was saying hit me
He said, “I went to pray
And sent my disciples away
On a boat and from the maintain top
On the sea struggling against the wave”
So He walked out on the water
'Bout to pass them by until they noticed him
Basically, man, if you don't stop the bullshhh and notice
God and pay attention to Him instead of this, forget the
shhh y'all doin'.

-Low-Low

From The Beat: That same book says, “Judge not lest ye be judged.” Matthew 7:1. Seems like it would be more useful for you to turn your focus on yourself, and let others deal with their own stuff...



What The Money Can't Fix

There are things that money can't fix and I believe one of those things are love. In the materialistic world we live in today, leads us to think that the more money we have, the more love is gonna come wit' it. But I don't believe that's true. Even if I had billions, it wouldn't be able to replace the void we need from love. Whether you believe it or not, it's true money can't buy you love! Period!

-Ballard

From The Beat: This is one of those universal truths that is hard to believe when money seems to be able to solve so many of our problems. We know what you wrote is true, though, because there are too many rich people unhappy in love — and too many poor people whom love has brought happiness to.

Life Ain't What You See On TV

“Life is a and then you die,” (words by Mac Dre). I never got that when I was young, now I see. Life ain't what you see on TV. Life in the US ain't as hard as in foreign countries, but still we all gotta complain about something.

-Free Ya'self

From The Beat: Actually, life in the U.S. is harder than it is in some countries but easier than it is in others. What else do you like to complain about?

Gettin' My Paper

I be on the block all damn night, gettin' my paper. That's all I do is get paper and all the girls, ya 'mean? Girls come and go all the damn time, 'cause that's how it is, bra. It's nothing. When I get out, I'm going to do what I do — gettin' my girls and the paper. Peace, yo' boy.

-J Mac

From The Beat: This is like a recipe from handing away your freedom again! You brag about going back to the block to “do what you do,” as if the system is not waiting for you to do what you do so they can do what they do, and put you back in the box! Time to grow up so you can stay out of the places the system has waiting for you.

Super Bowl Party

All I'm going to say is to hell with the halls! I can't wait till I get out. Print this or not, I really don't give a damn. I'm here doing time.

I just got off DRB for some bs so right now I got hella energy. The Super Bowl was cracking! We had a little party here in the Max Unit feel me! At the Super Bowl party we had hella food!

-Angel

From The Beat: What kind of food did you have at the party? Who brought it? You can say to hell with the halls if you want, but unless you make some changes, it's the halls [or worse] that will be saying to hell with you!

No Time To Play

Man, what's good with The Beat? This the D posted up in this thang, man. You already know I'm bustin' till its empty ya dig. 'Cause most of these brothas be like, “Yeah, I'm bustin' till it's empty.” But when the beef is on they be the first ones to hide.

But man, the way it is went from fist fight to shoot outs damn near everyday. And me, I'm bustin' 'cause I ain't got time to play with nobody. They play they get played.

-Daddy-O

From The Beat: Yeah, but who's getting played now? Maybe it's time to stop playing!

Don't Come Here!

Wha's poppin' with The Beat? This ya man, Chris, ya dig? From that black hole, ya heard me? But I'ma let y'all know that if y'all got a commitment to the Ranch, just deny it, 'cause it ain't coo'. I would rather do my time in the halls. It ain't nothing but suckas up here, a few real ninjas. But don't come to the Ranch. Go somewhere else or if you do come up here, run! I'm out.

Examples:

1. You can get extra time added.
2. Take showers next to each other
3. One phone call a week
4. Counselors write you up for more time
5. It's dirty as hell
6. Nasty-ass food

-Chris

From The Beat: We're sorry you don't like the Ranch, but running is no solution to your problems. That's something you'll learn more and more as you mature; running simply postpones what you have to deal with sooner or later. It shouldn't be a question of the Hall or the Ranch. Seems to us the true solution to your problem is not to put yourself in the situations that lead to one or the other in the first place.

Beat, What's Going On

It's yo' Boi Acie just doing time. They trying play a goon right now. But they can't keep a real goon forever, so when I hit them streets, it's go be popping boy, if you know what I mean.

But to all my goons, watch out for them suckas and them cops cause. They trying to shut the 'hood down, so y'all stay on y'all toes 'cause when this boy come home, we go be on top.

-Boi Acie

From The Beat: Tell the 2,000 boys doing “Life Without the Possibility of Parole” across the country that they can't hold you down forever. They were all under 18 when they committed their crimes, and not one of them will ever breathe free air again!

No Regrets!

What's good with The Beat? Once again, this ya boy Ulala...

Yeah, topic for today is “ Havin' no regrets.” When you do something, do it without regret 'cause it will sometimes come back and haunt you. But the only thing you supposed to have regrets is hurtin' your family, because that is your number one priority. Other than that have no regrets.

I'm gone. To all tha brahs and little brahs, keep ya head up...

-Ulala

From The Beat: Who makes these rules? Why should you only regret hurting your family, and no one else? We regret all the people we've hurt over the years, family and not. Everybody is part of so mebody's family, so why are some families worth more than others?

Man, I Miss My Dawg

What's up with The Beat? This the Squeezer Newt, the money chaser. Maine, I miss my cousin, “Junk.” He taught me everything about the streets — how to keep my eyes open, don't never slip, ride wit' my fire, get money, don't trust nobody, and keep yo' mouth closed. It run in our bloodline. I'm about whatever, ya heard me? I love you, Junk. We gotta keep our heads up.

-Sergeant Newt

From The Beat: What happened to your main man? Did all that he thought he know about the streets still fail to protect him? Nothing runs in your bloodline except blood. The rest is all learned. It's time to learn something different!

Addicted

I like cocaine.
I don't like the malillas (tweaking)
I remember those days
I don't remember many days
I get mad when I forget
I laugh when I remember
I wish I could go back
I want some more
If only I could get a line
I am an addict

-Jovan

From The Beat: We're addicted to your words, Temper. Don't you see how truly creative you are when you're not tweaking? Don't you see how much you have to offer when you're in your own, clear mind? We do!

Joyful As A Son

She is as tired as peanut butter sticking on your teeth.
Peanut butter sandwiches are as tiring as watching TV.
Joy is like a happy photograph of your family.

Photographs are as joyful as a son.
Joy is like a happy photograph of your family that goes on and on and most likely won't go away.

-Temper

From The Beat: Were you looking at a family photo when you wrote this? We love the metaphor, "tired as peanut butter sticking on your teeth." We're not sure why that sounds "tired," but we still love it.

My Primo

I would like to say go Lakers baby! We just beat the Celtics in overtime at their house.

Anyways, let me just say Q-vo to the camaradas up in the halls and to my stupid lil primo of mine. He got in a car accident and I feel bad 'cause he is like a brother to me. He has always been there for me.

I just wanna say take good care of yourself 'cause you have people that love you. Think about your Jefita and your two lil' carnalitos. They love you a lot. What do you think would happen to them if they found out that you had died in that car accident of yours? Shhh! I wouldn't like to even think about it.

How I wish you were here so I could give you a lesson. And what got my mind out of all this is that the vatos my primo was with in the car ran and left my primo to die. Lucky him, he got rushed to the hospital and spent the night in there... Just so you know, your primo Temper loves you and cares for you. Hope to see you soon.

-Temper

From The Beat: If you don't understand why we took out a few of your lines, ask Dave. But what we left in is all good. You're so right... what if he had died in that accident, how would that have affected his mother and siblings for the rest of their lives? That's why it's important to remember who you are connected to, and what you owe them.

Plan For A Baby

Check it out Beat. This is the leader of your life but I ain't gonna say it twice. Before I say something today, I'm gonna soak you like a sponge. That's going to you ladies before you have a baby, think about it, don't just try to hand off yo' ninja. Having a baby with a baby is a struggle. So plan before you give birth.

-Big Nasty

From The Beat: We wish more young men (and young women) would take these words to heart. It's so much easier today to be responsible, and not bring children into the world before you're ready to take care of them. We wish more young people followed your advice!

Before I Went To Sleep Last Night

Just before I went to sleep last night, I thought about my family, about how I won't be out with them for a long time, how much I'm going to miss them. I just hope I'll be with them. Well this is a short one this week Beat. I wanna give my love and respect to the homeboys. Late.

-Baby G

From The Beat: Okay, BG, you're entitled to dash off a short one from time to time. We hope that whether you are with them or apart, you and your family only grow even closer.

I Messed Up

What's good Beat? This be Sleepy from Santa Clara. Well, I just came back from a group home and I ran from it. Now I'm going out of state.

Well, I been mad when I'm here because this is the seventh time I'm here. Well anyway, the thing I thought about was my child and my lady Nissa. I miss my son, he's two years old. I really want to do my program this time. I was thinking about my girlfriend; she has really been there for me. She is everything to me, I miss her so much.

I feel dumb because I'm just a mess up. I messed up I can't even get a good job because of my tattoos. When I get out I want to be there for my lady. I don't want to lose her. I remember when we used to talk about when we get older. Man she's on my mind all the time I'm going to do good and I'm gonna try harder in my programs in school and at home just for my lady Nissa and my son.

Well, to everybody in here stay up and do good. Don't run from your programs like the ranch or group home much love and respect duces.

-Sleepy

From The Beat: We all mess up, Sleepy, what's important is whether or not we learn from our mistakes. This is your 7th time in the hall, what will you make of it? You can either open your eyes and realize that the path you're on will get you no where or you can ignore it like before, you make your own choices. You're young and you have your whole life ahead of you, Sleepy, don't give up just because of your past or your tats! Remember, you decide where your life goes!

JOVAN

Joyful
Oso
Varrio
Ant
No

CRAZY

Car
Round
At
Zone
Yolanda

LUNATIC

Lolo
Under
Never
Apple
Temper
Ice
Creepy

-Jovan

From The Beat: We put these little nonsense poems together (and removed the last one, INSANE) because they seem to go together. It seems like somebody has too much time on his hands...

Turning Back The Hands Of Time

If I could turn back the hands of time I would prevent my loved ones from dying, but most of all I would prevent my friend Carlos from leaving us.

I miss him so much and I want him to know I'll never forget about him. RIP Carlos M. You'll always be missed.

-Joanna

From The Beat: We're truly sorry for your loss. Is there anything you learned now that you would tell him if you could?

Barrio First, Love Second

I don't love a thing
Never will it be
For me and a girl
'Cause I'm a gangster 'til I die
And she would never understand
That my barrio comes first
So stressing ain't for me

-Temper

From The Beat: Don't count love out, Temper. No one can say what is or is not in their future. What you think you know for sure today may be as old as telephone booths tomorrow! Love has a way of sweeping away everything you thought you knew and believed, so be ready...

Lonely Road

I went in with five racks,
Put my life on the line for just one hand.
Hundreds and fifties in my vision,
Slowly fading away in the distance.
Wanting to be rich, but once I was, it wasn't enough,
Greed took control, I wanted to be the only one at the top.
Standing alone, fearless, bowing down to no man coming up,
Reached my level and fell off the boat 'cause one flaw.
Mind racing quick, I'm in the game,
Didn't know money can bring this much pain.
Shot a few like it was nothing,
Expected y'all to do the same.
Side deals being made behind my back,
Laughed it off for a while till I cashed my last check.
I flipped the script again and again, no means to disrespect,
You hated, oh too long, showed yo" lil homie no love,
But who's working for who now, come up quick leaving y'all in the dust.
Years ago it was all good,
There was not one day when we wouldn't have fun.
But times have changed, respect my position crept up in front unnoticed
All y'all thinking I owe you something.
I got love for y'all but I'm showing tough love 'cause that's what I was given growing up in these streets,
Shed tears from time to time, but now my heart's begging to freeze.
Look into my eyes for those who knew me, always nothing but good memories,
Fading away now that I'm gone let your eyes continue bleeding.

-Jeff

From The Beat: This piece of fine poetry is much too good to be labeled by the name you chose! It's too easy to disrespect a piece by someone with the name you gave yourself, so we put your real name on it. The subject of greed, is one that writers have struggled with throughout history. (Shakespeare called jealousy — which is another form of greed — that "green-eyed monster.") We have known many people who succeeded at making money but were never able to be satisfied because they always wanted more. Buddhists believe his dissatisfaction with what we have is source of all our unhappiness.

I Thought About MyMan

What up, Beat? I'm going to write about what I thought about last night...I thought about my man and how it sucks being in here because I can't sleep with him at night, laugh and stay up late like three in the morning watching George Lopez. Damn, I really miss him.

I also thought about my mom and my family, I miss them so much! I never realized that I could miss them so much I'm glad that they got my back to the fullest and they are here for me no matter what.

I also thought about my son, I pray every night hoping that I'm going to get released by the time my baby is due so I can spend every second with him, my baby's daddy, and my family. That's what I thought about last night before I went to sleep...

-Marlene

From The Beat: It must be emotionally tough to be away from your man, tough for your man too. Just do your time, do good and the next time you have court speak up and tell the judge about your situation, it doesn't hurt to come from your heart.

Last Night

Just before I went to sleep last night I though about why I'm here...All the things I'm going through or what I might be facing. I think about my family and how they are doing. I'm thinking about if they are okay and I hope they aren't stressing.

I think about if I wasn't here then what would I be doing. I think about my sister Fame and chilling with her. I think about why I couldn't show her another way. I think about why I couldn't be a better role model.

I think about all the money I am missing our son. I think about my boo, Kb. I think about al the things I could be doing, like playing ball. I think about all the dreams I once had. I think about Miranda, Claudia, Rosa, Nana, and Erica.

I also am hoping that God does give us all a second chance. I think about my love, my brother Snaps, hoping he is doing all right. I'm just thinking about all the shhh. I'm just thinking about what is going to happen to me.

-Faith

From The Beat: Although you lightened up this piece a bit by talking about that cheddah, we know that it's your family that occupies your mind. It's not too late to set a good example for your sister, if she sees you doing good even though your in the place you are then she might follow suit, it doesn't hurt to try.

Small Fish, Big Ocean

The slimy green fish
was swimming around
the huge ocean
with a big fat fish
at it's side

-Jovan

From The Beat: We'd love for you to expand this short poem into a longer piece. Are you the slimy green fish or the big fat shark?

Before I Went To Sleep

Just before I went to sleep I thought about my freedom, my family, and my case because I can't wait to be free and have no one to tell me when to take a shower or go to sleep, come on now, and my family because that's my life. I love my family and I can't wait to be with them.

-Miranda

From The Beat: We know that your family is thinking about you too, and we hope that once you get out you'll think twice before you do anything that'll land you back in the halls.

Joy

Joy is like the smell of sweet.
Joy is like the taste of chocolate.
Joy is like the touch of a smooth hand.
Joy is like the sound of raindrops.
Joy is like the sight of one you love.

-Jovan

From The Beat: Joy is a boy and his computer pounding out delicious poems like this!

Should I Stay or Should I Go?

What's good? This is the homie Torta. Just wanted to tell you what I was thinking about before I went to sleep last night. It was that I'm 'bout to go to a group home and I don't know if I should stav it out or run.

Most likely I might just do it 'cause I don't want to let my family down or my lady, but man, I should've just did EMP and passed it but it's cool shhh happens and now I have to pay the consequences.

-Jesse

From The Beat: You're not the first to think about running, and you know it'll only 'cause more trouble. Be smart and think it through. We hope you go with your later idea and just stick it out because the more you run the more time you build up.

Hang On

Here I come from the dark side of San Jo stressed and I cry, waiting for my release. Every night in Juvi I creep and I crawl, thinking about all the good old days thrown away in the trash. I see my family shed a tear and the devil eats me up alive.

I'm a gangsta of Christ, and I don't care what you say, this is my life. I gotta keep pushing, gotta keep moving, I'm drifting on a memory thinking about all those good old days with my family, miss my sisters, miss my brother, I know I gotta keep holding on, keep my head up 'til my death. I hold my head up high coming back home. Hang on.

-Moe Joe

From The Beat: A gangsta of Christ? That's an interesting concept to think about. The old days aren't in the trash; they are part of you, just like all our days are a part of us. Use the past to design a different future, one that you can be proud of.

Last Night

Last night before I went to sleep I thought about getting out of juvenile hall and doing right so I can go on with my life. I thought about my girlfriend last night and my daughter. I can't wait to get out and see everyone. Well, stay up Beat I'm out.

-Yung Cash

From The Beat: You said that you can't wait to go out and see your daughter and girl but what will you do to make sure you stay with your daughter and girl?

Gouda, Gwoup, That Cheddah

What's good, Beat? For me, nothing, just living it day by day. But I think that money can fix everything. Money makes the world go 'round, so if you all don't know money is everything.

So learn about that Gouda, gwoup, that cheddah... "Money on my mind."

-Faith

From The Beat: What makes you think that money makes the world go 'round? If money weren't invented or we had no use for it then what do you think would make the world go 'round?

Thinking Of You

Just before I went to sleep last night I thought about you...I wonder how you're doing? I hope you're okay, I miss you so much, but when I see you I know I don't have anything to say.

I think about us in the outs together kicking it and doing what we do best. I think about it, imagine it, knowing nothing is going to happen between me and you. I'm just hoping for the day you realize how much I love you.

-Joanna

From The Beat: You have a lot of thoughts running through your mind at the end of the day! Who do you miss so much that prompted you to write this? Have you told that certain someone the thoughts that go through your mind?

Bad Thoughts

I don't have roommates most of the nights so I think a lot at night. Sometimes I imagine happy thoughts about my family, my son, and our future.

Sometimes memories pop into my head and wicked and revengeful thoughts flow into my head. I try so hard not to think that way because I know they only lead to bad things, but sometimes I just can't help it.

-Foolish

From The Beat: It's so easy to not think about our problems or worries during the day but when night falls and it's time for bed, then all the thoughts start pouring in. We know it's hard to not think about the bad shhh that goes through our minds but there's a difference between thinking about it and acting on it. What do you think you can do to stop the urge to do something bad when your thoughts start to drift to those things?

If You Were Your Parents

If I were a parent, I would not hit my kids at all. I would talk to them and discipline them by yelling or taking their things away 'till they learn right from wrong.

Also I would be a different kind of parent by not making the mistakes my parents did with me. How it makes it the right way is by me not hurting my kids. And I would deal with a person like me by being more concerned wit my school...

-Jesse

From The Beat: What were those mistakes your parents made? If they had been different with you, would you be the person you are not or in this situation? We like your ideas and we hope you be a different parent than your own parents with your future kids.

Before I Went To Sleep

Que vole, The Beat and Beat readers, I hope to find you in the best of ways and in spirits, but anyways, just before I went to sleep last night I was thinking about my brother. He is locked up in Salinas Valley State Prison, he's been locked up for three years and a half. He has ten more years to go.

Well, the reason I thought about him is because I remember all the advice he gave me, and the good times. I look up to him a lot.

Everyday I think about him and I wonder if he is okay and how he is doing, and if he is thinking about me like I'm thinking about him. Like my brother always used to tell me, it's education or incarceration. I guess I need to start following this one.

-M

From The Beat: We know that there is someone out there who will take your brother's advice and use it for their own good (and hopefully pass it on), if not you. We wish the best to you and your brother and we hope you two will be reunited soon.

Bringing Back The Dead

It's the homie Elmo writing from the max. If I could go back in time and prevent the death of my grandpa, I would try to help my grandpa in any possible way that I could.

My grandpa died of a heart attack and no one helped him because no one was around to help him. When I think about it, it makes me sad and mad at the same time because I wasn't there for him.

I was a little kid; he passed away November 2001, but still remains in my heart and memory. If I could have an hour with him, I would talk to him and tell him how much he means to me and how much I favor him. He was one of the coolest grandpas ever. I would tell him how much my life has changed and how our family is growing.

I know grandpa you would tell me lots of good things because you loved me and wouldn't even hurt me. Grandpa, I just want you to know that I miss you and pray for you every single night before I go to bed. You're gone but never forgotten – the family misses you. Grandpa Jose Armando Rodriguez (Rest in Paradise) RIP.

-Elmo

From The Beat: RIP Jose Armando Rodriguez. We are sorry for your loss. It's hard when we lose someone very important like our grandparents and loved ones. Now, what matters is your current situation and what you have planned for your life. If he was here, where would you be? Would your life be a different one? Maybe it's time for you to honor his name by setting up a good example and becoming a person like he was.

Just Before I Went To Sleep Last Night...

I thought about what I would be doing if I hadn't gotten in trouble or on probation. I also thought about how my parents would feel about me or even how I would feel about myself.

I also thought about what I'm going to do for my life like the next step to being a grown up.

I'm already 18 going to be 19 and I don't want to live the rest of my life in and out of jail. I want to have a good life, drive a good car, have a house, and a family just like regular people do.

I want to pay bills, have family's parties for my family and not live a criminal life.

Another thing I thought about is how to start a new life because I'm at the age when I want to live happy and have things other 18 year olds have like cars and other things.

-William

From The Beat: Then, what are you waiting for? If this is what you want for your future, then go ahead and build up all your desires and dreams. You can achieve anything you want as long as you desire it with your heart. To want is power.

All I Can Do Is Pray

Thinking about my mother, and brother all day, and night.

I always worry about them, because I have exactly no idea where they are at right now.

They lost our home this last month I haven't talked to them at all.

I don't know where they're living, if they have money to eat or anything. Every single night...all I can do is pray.

-Franco

From The Beat: It must be hard to feel powerless to help your family when they're in trouble. Does praying make you feel less powerless, and if so, why do you think that is? Hebrews 11:1 says that "faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." What evidence do you have that prayer works? What do you want to do in addition to praying in order to help your family when you get out?

Beat

What's cracking Beat? It's the homeboy Lil' Man from San Jose. I'm here to drop some lines about what I was thinking about last night.

Just before I went to sleep last night I was thinking about freedom. I miss being out there with my familia and the homeboys, and can't forget about the jainas. Just posted popping OE after OE and bumping oldies.

-Lil' Man

From The Beat: We at the Beat find that it's those quiet moments between waking and sleeping where you can't hide from what you're really feeling—in your case, missing freedom and the people you love. What do you think you can tell the court about why you deserve to be free? Are there changes or sacrifices you're willing to make in exchange for another shot at life on the outside?

What's On My Mind

Hey que onda Beat? Pues today I'm going to write about what was on my mind. Last night, I started by realizing that I'm about to get out and I'm going to be 19 already. I started to think about some kind of plan to make it out there and I just couldn't figure out where to start.

I know I got to do something to keep myself busy or I'm going to end up next door, but I couldn't think of anything, but I still got a couple of weeks to think about it and hopefully I can come up with something good. So that's it got now, to all the homies in here, keep your head up.

-Grumpy

From The Beat: Let us help you. Get out, stay away from your old ways of being, go to school, put an effort in getting good grades, get your high school diploma or GED, go to college, meet people who can guide you to a successful road, get a job, and be responsible. If you do what we suggest you to do, we guarantee that you will have a better life - full of joy and pride.

Bringing Back The Dead

If I could bring back the dead, I would bring back my grandpa. The reason why I would bring back my grandpa is because he was the one that kept me out of trouble.

Also, because my gramma wasn't ready for him to die; she has a really broken heart. She don't know how to move on. I wish he was here to calm her down because she's going crazy.

If I had one hour with him that would be the greatest because I would want to ask him about his childhood phase and how he got out of them.

-B.

From The Beat: Maybe your grandmother needs your support. It's really hard to deal with such as experience your grandmother is going through. If we were you, we would do our best to be there for her during the hardest time of her life.

Bringing Back The Dead

If I could bring back the dead, I would bring back my homie Bash. He got shot in the face with a 12 gauge shotgun. RIP. Well, I don't know if my life would be different, I'd probably still be here.

But I would still have a solid homie to chill with. I would kick it with him more and tell him what has been going on since he left. I would tell him that I'm not reppin that 'hood anymore and that I got a kid now.

I don't know what he would say, but I know that he'd still be my boy.

-Shrek

From The Beat: We're sorry for your loss. What do you think he would tell you to do differently now that you are our of your 'hood and have a kid? Is your kid the reason why you decide to change your life around? If so, we are glad. Give your kid what he deserves – a dad.

Oldies On The Juvenile Hall Dial

If I could play some oldies for all in the hall I would play these:

1. Confessing a feeling
2. Don't be afraid
3. Me and you
4. Oogum boogum
5. Catch you on the rebound
6. Wishing on a star
7. I'm the one who knows
8. Don't let me be misunderstood
9. Agony and ecstasy
- 10 . Papa was a rolling stone

These are mine. What about yours?

-Lil' Man

From The Beat: Thanks for the playlist! What made you choose these songs—do they make you get up and dance, do they remind you of a person or place that's special to you, or do you love them for reasons you can't explain? What do you think attaches us to music?

Bringing Back Jose

If I would bring back the dead, I would bring back my boy Jose...and my life would be different because I would want to bury my boy during my high school year, and yeah I would still be here. Why is because I wouldn't want to die at a young age. That person is my boy and I will ride or die for my ninja. I'm always your boy no matter what.

-Jesse

From The Beat: Jose's death hurts we see, yet is death hasn't made you look at your life any different? Or has it?

Just Before Bed I Thought

What's good, Beat? Just before bed I thought about death. I don't know why but it's always on my mind. This may sound weird but I want to experience it to see how it really feels and if I'm really destined to go to the place I want. That's why death ain't nothing to me, if it comes to me then I guess it's about that time. So if I die then hopefully I'll see some of you up there. That's all I got for today so I'm out!

-M Jr.

From The Beat: Death is a very scary thought for many people because after death we don't know what happens to ourselves. Where do you think we go after death, Mullen? Why do you think death doesn't bother you as much as it bothers some of your peers?

Before I Went To Sleep

When I am in my cell on my bunk before I go to sleep, I think about all kinds of things. I think about my little sister, if she is getting in trouble, or if she need me.

I think about my case and my upcoming trial. If I lose will they give me life or show mercy. I think about my brothers and why they don't write me.

I think about what will happen if I don't leave the gang when I go to the pinta (pen). I think about girls that I have been with, and how much I miss just holding a girl in my arms.

But most of all, I think about what I will see when I wake up, and every night I hope it won't be the same thing as before I went to sleep.

RIP "Papi" I miss and love you, I will see you again one day.

-Geko

From The Beat: Do you think your sister misses you? What do you think would happen if you don't quit the gang life? What if they show mercy on your case, how would you think in using this opportunity?

Bring Back My Great Grandma

If I could bring back the dead, I would bring back my great grandma. I've heard that she was a good person. My mom and aunties and uncles tell me a lot about her, that she was a good cook, respectful person, and showed a lot of love everywhere she went.

That is the reason why I would like to bring her back. I would just like one time to meet her and say, "I am your grandson and I really love all the stories I've heard about you." She was a very strong woman. She was a single mother with 6 kids. She left her husband because he would beat on her in front of my grandma and the others. I think she raised my grandma right. If she was still here, I would love to try her cooking mostly her cookies because everyone from my family says she makes the best cookies and I would like to see for myself.

I've never met her but I know she is in a good place now, resting and looking over all of my family. I love you great grandma!

-Great Grandson

From The Beat: That's nice! She sounded like a wonderful person. So, would you listen to her if she ask you to stop doing what you do to get in here?

RIP Homie

Why do the homie got to die like that? He was only 19 years old before he got chopped up. We miss you, man. When I die, meet me at the gates just in case I don't get in. Love and be safe. I'm out.

-Lil' Boy

From The Beat: What would you tell your friend now, before you two meet at "the gates", Lil Boy?

Before I Went to Sleep

What's good with it tonight, Beat? Last night before I went to sleep I was thinking about change. It's hard for change but if you are dedicated to something I guess there is no change. But things are possible, it only takes time and with time everything changes, but without time nothing will happen and everything will be the same.

I was also thinking about family, I've been through a lot with them and without but what I can say is that family always come first. I've put my family through a lot just because I do things that I am not suppose to and for every bad thing I've done I apologize for all of it.

I was also thinking about my first love. I wish that she was still here for me but I put her through things that hurt her and for that I apologize for all the hurt and pain I put her through.

-Tanks

From The Beat: Did you mean to use this piece to apologize to your loved ones, Tanks? That's a sweet gesture but why not apologize with your actions instead? You can make it up to your family by staying out of the halls and doing better for yourself and it'll also show your ex-girl that you do care and that you are able to change from your old ways.

What's Crackin'!

What's cracking Beat? This the homeboy Pato from San Jose. I'm back up in the hall for a 6th time. Damn I need to stop blowing them trees and snorting them lines. Haha naw I'm not going to stop, I can't, I love that mary jane. Well that's it for now until next times. I'm out!

-Pato

From The Beat: We don't mean to sound like total squares, but if this stuff keeps getting you in trouble, why do you keep at it? It sounds like you're hovering on the edge of making some better decisions for yourself. What's holding you back?

A Broken Family

What money can't fix: what money can't fix is mainly family. I remember when my family was ballin', when my dad was on the outs. But when he got locked up, we went way down.

When I get out of here, if I do, I don't even know where I'm going to live. And with no money I feel like my family has come more together, because we need one another.

-Franco

From The Beat: You are wiser than you know. A lot of families, especially families that have a lot of money, buy into the misguided notion that money can fix problems or rebuild broken relationships. You're right on the money for knowing that it can't. It sounds like the ups and downs your family's been through have offered you some major perspective: on what your family means to you, on what's really important, on what risks are worth taking.

Update To Life

Well @-vole Beat and Beat readers, this is Sneaks dropping some linias (lines) with my utmost love and respect.

Well, today I saw so many people coming back. I've been here for nine months, honestly, I've opened my eyes a little more. I'm starting to think more before I react so I don't keep ending in this place. I have realized the pain I've caused my family and lady.

It's time to get my education and plan for the future. I passed the exit exam so I am one step closer to graduating. Wish me luck, college is next. Well, that's all gone poof!

-Sneaks

From The Beat: We're so happy that you planned ahead, it's always good to have your goals laid out. How does it make you feel when you see other kids who've already left a long time ago coming back for another stint in the hall? Do you think the same will happen to you? What advice would you give the guys who left and are now back?

Money Makes The World Turn

Some people say money doesn't make you happy. Money itself doesn't necessarily make us all happy but it makes me happy because I know what I can get with money. Most people want things that money brings, which is why you find a lot of us in here for charges that revolve around money. If we can't make enough money the legal way then we do what it takes like slanging or stealing.

I would say money makes me happier because I know what it brings, even though money is not the only thing that makes me happy. Put it this way: if you smoke or pop or snort or drink, money makes you happy because you need money for those things, even if you get it for free by robbing or a friend 'cause someone has to buy it for you to have it. Money makes the world turn.

-Hearst

From The Beat: This is a good argument, Hearst, why do you think money holds such a high value with us? It is, after all, just paper. Do you think the world would be better off without money?

Money Can't Buy Gangs

One thing that money can never fix is gangs. The government can spend all the money they want on gang task force and anti-gang movements, but we're never going to leave.

We're here and they can spend all the money they want but it won't fix anything.

Money can't change our minds on our beliefs.

-Speedy

From The Beat: Why do kids join the gangs? What enticed you to join?

Bringing Back The Dead

What's good, Beat? Man o' man, today I'm going to talk about bringing back the dead. The one person I would bring back is my unborn little brother or sister.

Last year my mom had a miscarriage and she had twelve kids already and if she would have had this one it would be thirteen, so I think if she would have had the baby I would of not have that much hatred to this world.

Everyday I wake up mad at the world because I didn't get to see him/her or even hold him/her. Don't get me wrong my moms didn't want the miscarriage but I don't know where I'm going with this but to all keep your heads up.

-Yung Uso Kefi

From The Beat: That's tough, Yung Uso...did you ever tell your mother how you feel? She's probably going through an extremely hard time, what with the miscarriage and then one of her sons locked up... speaking about these things can be so hard but once you get started the talking comes easier and you'll feel a hundred times better. We're sorry that this happened to you and mother, Yung Uso, and we hope that over time you and your mom can finally heal, together.

Night Time Thoughts

Last night before I went to sleep I thought about females. It wasn't nothing dirty or anything but it was just about being with a girl and actually having a good time. I miss how that feels.

I haven't actually interacted with a girl for almost seven months now. By now, my mouthpiece is kinda rusty. But if it's on paper, my shhh off the hook. All crazy. Haha. But yeah, that's just a few words on what I was thinking about last night.

That's all I got for now. Until pencil meets paper.

-Dave

From The Beat: Well, once you get out you can run around spitting game to all the fly females, Dave. Maybe you'll think twice before you do something that could get you sent to the halls, the male halls, right Dave?

Life As A Gangster

Life as a gangster staying in the streets

Committing a crime running away from the heat

Get locked up thinking about what you did

You don't appreciate what your mom gave you

And a place to live.

-Eric

From The Beat: This is a great start to a poem, Eric! We hope that you can finish it next time.

If I Were My Parent

If I were my dad I would be the best dad a dad could be. Don't get me wrong, I ain't gonna let my kid run around and act like a punk, I'm gonna teach my kid manners and how to be a man.

Every year he gets older I would let him stay out longer and have girlfriends. I would tell him to wear condoms. I really wouldn't trip off him smoking weed and drinking as long as he could conduct himself in public and around me but for him to do that I want schoolwork to be done before 5:00. And I would tell him everyone needs an education to survive in life. I want him to be a successful person in life.

Well Beat, that's all I got for you take care.

-Monkey

From The Beat: This is great, Monkey, but don't you think you could be a lenient dad without letting your kid smoke weed or drink?

If I Were A Parent

If I were a parent, first of all I wouldn't allow myself to go chill with the wrong people and I wouldn't let myself do drugs. I'd be a parent that has good communication and I would satisfy my kids' needs.

I would put myself on the right path and not let myself slack off. I would stop myself from sneaking out at night and punish myself harsher. And I wouldn't allow myself to spend money on the wrong things. And I'd keep myself very busy, so that I wouldn't be in trouble. I wouldn't allot myself to be bored.

-Jairo

From The Beat: Knowing what you would do if you were the parent then why not actually do these things? It sounds like you know what you're doing and you know what is right an wrong so why do you think you've ended up in the halls, Jairo? You don't have to wait for your parents to tell you to stop, Jairo, because it sounds like you know where you need to change.

My Homeboy RIP

Well, if I can I would bring back my homie from Gilroy. I don't think he didn't deserve to die at a young age but I just say rest in peace and don't trip all from Gilroy are always gonna remember you, even me. Well, I'm out and rest in peace.

-Lil' S

From The Beat: Is there anything you would say to homie now, if you could, Soldier?

The Day Before

Just before I went to sleep last night, I thought about the day before I got locked. I was at James Ranch and didn't go back from the OT. So I was on the run for a week.

The day before juras (cops) caught me, the homie from my hood gave me a ride to the motel and asked if I wanted to stay at his pad with some hynas (girls) and I told him that I was going to stay. So I did and chilled with the homies and I was so high and pedo (drunk) that I fell asleep and then the juras (cops) knocked on the door and took everybody out and I got locked for that.

But it's firme (cool) because I got Life Skills. Well, keep your guys heads up!

-Lil' Bones

From The Beat: You lucked out this time and got Life Skills but what about the next time? What if you slip up again and get sent back to the hall?

My Dead Homey

Dear Beat, what's up it's ya boy Man Child telling you a story about if I could bring someone back from the dead!

I was going up to San Francisco with my brother going to see my cousin Chops. My cousin was a Crip, and he had a three-year-old boy named Clemont. My cousin was walking to Duboce Park with his son to meet me and my brother. While he was walking some bfools rolled up in a car and said "Sup homey, you bang?"

He said "Yeah, but I don't want start anything with my son around," but they wasn't having it so they shot him - one in the head, two in the chest. That's cold.

-Man Child

From The Beat: That's a really vivid description of a really tragic day in your life. Why is Chops the person you'd most like to bring back—what about him was so special to you? Do you feel any sense of responsibility towards Clemont, and does what happened to Chops give you any perspective on how painful it is to lose someone you love to gang violence? In short, how do you think you can use your pain to help others?

I'd Bring Anyone

If I could bring back someone, I would probably not want to bring back anyone because I believe they are probably better off where they are now.

I think they would only come back to suffer in this world, pero, that's my way of seeing things.

-Grumpy

From The Beat: We respect your opinion. We don't blame the way you are thinking because life right now is very hard and cruel. If you had the power to change it, how would you change this world, so you can bring back your loved ones?



Crystal Nights

What's up? This is your homie Lil Vago. Well, when I went to sleep last night, I thought about my homies, what I used to do with them.

I used to do crystal meth and I miss those days 'cause when you use that kind of drug and you don't care about nothing. Also, I was thinking about my homie, Frankie, that passed away the 2-5-08 but I ain't trippin'. RIP.

-Lil' Vago

From The Beat: Have you ever seen what the long-term effects of crystal meth are? If you do your research on the drugs you like to take then maybe you won't like them once you find out what they do to you in the end. Wise up!

Family

Just before I went to sleep last night, I thought about my family. Who at one time I thought I wont see.

Just that night one homie came and ended up being my roommate and he's from my hood and I wonder if that will be bad or good. I talked to my mom that day and she said if I behaved that I'll be out soon.

I've been here one month and all these days have been dead time. I wonder if my next court date, February 19, will I leave or will I stay, so just wait and see what they'll say.

-Lil' Darky

From The Beat: We hope that you take your mothers advice this time, and use it to your advantage.

They're Everywhere

In the world we live in it's safe to say (not many people agree) that gangs are everywhere. Even in the places we don't think to look, for example the police, the biggest gang in "the whole world" let me explain.

People look at gangs even define them as a large group of people that rep a certain turf or area. Well, how does that sound? Police! Similar to those that yell out there hood. And they even have an area that they hang out at, their precinct.

They have weapons similar to those that are in gangs and take lives if nessesary, similar to gangs. They are a gang. They are probably the first to create gangs. Cops, they carry a 'cause to protect and serve and have the artillery, no foot soldiers to carry out that cause.

There are even gangs in other places (military, security, probation, in the streets, sheriffs) they're everywhere. So to the world, if you're listening, open your eyes, and see the truth. It's kraz-e.

-Kraz-e

From The Beat: Wow, we're sure that this piece will open up a lot of peoples eyes! Do many of your friends also think the same about police, military, government, etc? What do you think we can do to change the "gang" like persona that the police in our cities carry? Also, remember, police are accepted by most, and street gangs, are, well... you tell us!

Money Can't Fix Family Problems

Money can't fix family problems. It also can't fix the past either...and there are things that money can't fix like a friendship and love relationships.

Even if I had all the money I want, it can't fix my past or it can't bring back the dead at all. Yeah and these things are a part of my life too. How I am going to overcome this is to be a better person in life and to do good with my family.

-Jesse

From The Beat: There are a lot of things money can't fix like your past like you said, but, can you fix your present and future? Tell us...

Bring Back The Dead...

Well what's up, Beat? This is Lil' Bones doing his time. If I could bring back the dead I would bring back Woolfy, Cholo, and Lil' Menace.

Me and the homies would be posted up in the varrio drinking some pisto (beer) and smoking the verde (green). Without those homies everything would be different.

Well that is all I want to say...

-Lil' Bones

From The Beat: How has your friends deaths affected you, Bones? What do you and your other varrio homies do to keep their memories alive?

The Dreams I Had

The dreams I had are now shattered. I always had a dream that I wanted to go into the military because I wanted to follow in my grandpa's footsteps. But now I can't because I got locked up for one stupid mistake, just chillin' with the wrong people at the wrong time.

I just want to get out of this hell hole, you know, I'm not going to let the time do me I'm going to do the time. I hope I get out of this place.

-Junior

From The Beat: Although you messed up now there's still time to do good. When you get out you'll have the choice to go and do the things you were locked up for, like hanging with the wrong crowd, or you can stay out of trouble and go to school and join some after school activities to keep you occupied.

My Grandfather

Just before I went to sleep last night, I thought about my grandfather, he was always there for me when I was young he had the same name I did.

He would be more than a grandfather, he was also my friend he would play with me any game I wanted to play even hide and go seek, what made it all complicated was that my grandpa was blind.

What I would tell my grandpa if he were alive to this day is that, he was, and is my biggest inspiration of my life and he will always be in my heart and thoughts,

Lastly, this is for my grandpa for he will always be in my heart and soul.

-Francisco

From The Beat: From this piece we can tell that you really appreciated your grandpa. What do you think your grandpa would say if he saw where you were today?

Money Can't Fix A Lot Of Things

I know money can't fix when your close homeys die. Money can fix lots of things, but only certain things—I also know it won't fix your feelings. Like when you're sad. But time will pass and you realize there's nothing you can do. You should move on but that doesn't mean forget your homey. But then you realize to stay on your toes and always keep your head up.

If I was a parent I wouldn't be as strict as my pops. But I'm a uso and family always comes first. But sometimes you just get tough love. But inside I stay strong. Just keep your head up and stay on your toes.

-Tre

From The Beat: It sounds like what you're saying is that a life lesson you've learned both from your family and your experience is that you always have to be smart and be aware—and you're right. Do you think that maybe your dad was trying to keep his head up and stay on his toes so he could protect you?

Growing Up Without

Well Beat, if I could bring back the dead I would bring back my grandma because she passed away three days before my birth date.

Growing up on these wicked streets of Santa Clara was hard because I was always away from her but now it's too late to bring her back.

Out for now, that's all I got for you so stay up to all, peace.

-Negro

From The Beat: Do you think your life would be different if your grandmother were still alive? How has her death affected you in your life?

Bringing Back my Grandpa

I would spend my last days at my aunt's house so I can be with my grandpa. If I could have gone back I would have told my dad to kick out my cousin so I can be with my grandpa. I was closer more with my grandpa then my dad.

If I had the chance to go back, I would not leave him without saying goodbye. I would share the last moment with him even smoke a stoke with him. I'll have a party with him even if it was just me and him. But if I had the chance I could tell my grandpa that I'll remember him always and forever.

-Pedro

From The Beat: It must be hard to not see your grandfather anymore. What are some ways that you and your family keep his memory alive?

The Pianist

The Pianist is about the Germans and Jews in World War Two. It's about a pianist living in the middle of war.

In the book there are Kamikazes, which means that the Germans were on self-destructive missions to get rid of all the Jews and all the queers. Hitler and his posse were trying to get rid of anyone who didn't fit the image of the full German Caucasian – blue eyes, blond hair, white skin. I think what happened to the Jews was barbaric. I think that America has a bunch of idiots too, Nazis that do not like the black race.

-Tony

From The Beat: Tony, wherever there is ignorance, you will find prejudice of all sorts. It could be against any group that does not fit the narrow boundaries of the haters' approval. At the root of this hatred is fear and ignorance. The more we all know about various races, religions, ethnic, and other human groups, such as GLBTs, the more tolerant we become. Our similarities as humans are great, and our differences are slight. What really matters is how we behave toward our fellow citizens, not what group we are born into.

What's On My Mind

What's on my mind is how long I will be in here, and where I'm going when I get out. I keep running away from home. My PO has said – 30 days, no matter what – for violating probation, but he is also considering boys' ranch.

I keep running from my mother's house and I'm going to request trying my father's. I hope it all works out the way I want it. That's what's on my mind.

-Joshua

From The Beat: That's plenty to have on your mind. But we hope you'll make room in there to consider what it is you need to do to end the cycle of running from your problems. You have only to acknowledge where running has led you to realize that there must be a better way to deal with your problems. We understand that answers don't always come easily. But take advantage of the fact there are some very fine people there at juvy who can help you figure out a plan. Don't be afraid to ask for help... please.

Life Of Pi

Why I think Life Of Pi is so interesting is because the guy Pi's dad is a zoo keeper who is with animals that are well trained. And I really like animals – like cheetahs, and other interesting creatures.

-Jesse

From The Beat: Jesse – have you considered becoming a veterinarian, or exploring other work that is involved with helping animals?

Sad, Confused, Lonely

I'm sad, confused and lonely.

I'm going to be facing time.

I asked my girl to marry me and she said OK.

The problem is, I don't know if she's going to wait for me because of the fact that I might be doing time in CYA, or Ranch Camp.

She and I are in love, but what if the sentence tears us apart from each other.

Also, my family is a big part of my life. I need them, a lot.

-Alex

From The Beat: It is such an important decision that it should not be made when you, or your girl, are under heavy pressure. Take care of your obligation first, which means doing whatever time you have to do. While you are doing your time, you can keep in touch with your girl, and you can be furthering your education. Getting that degree, and maybe even taking some college courses, through the mail, or by computer, if you have access to one, will help prepare you for the responsibilities of marriage, or whatever it is you ultimately decide to do. Making a wise decision now – to not rush things – will pay off down the line.

Last Words

If for some reason I were to leave my home, I would want my family to know that I love them and I'm always thinking about them. Not just that, but I would want them to know that I'm sorry for all the bad things I've done and I appreciate all the things they have done for me. That's all I can think of right now.

-Hear me

From The Beat: Those are beautiful thoughts. The next step is to start working on your problems. It will take courage and honesty.

Money

When I went to sleep, I was thinking about money. Sometimes I think about getting high and smoking like 5 blunts and drinking Hennessy, or smoking a Newport. When I get out, I'm going to be with my mom, just chilling at her house. Sometimes I chill with my friends, just smoking grapes. But when I'm with my mom, we go get coffee at Starbucks, or we walk to the store.

-G

From The Beat: Stick with your mom, then. Sounds like you're not ready to be on your own. And quite possibly, you need some help to stay clean and sober. Millions of people have been help by AA or NA. Think about it.

Sitting Alone

I sit alone with an absent mind that's not in this world. Being incarcerated, I dream and reminisce on better days.

I'm missing Lycette. Hope she's doing good.

Valentine's Day is coming up and I can't be there with her to enjoy it.

Through this darkness and sadness there is also sunlight and happiness.

But right now I got cornered by Dennis, The Beat guy.

He asked me for a favor. All the times I ask him for a favor, he comes through.

He has supported me so much since May of 2008, through right now.

I feel like I am letting him down, because I cannot fulfill his request.

He wants me to lend him a piece of my knowledge, the dictionary he gave me,

so he can give it to someone here who will soon be headed deeper into the system.

But I just can't part with it.

-Andres

From The Beat: The truth is, Dennis was deeply impressed with how much that dictionary means to you, and rather than feel bad, he actually felt good. He was just trying to save an extra trip. But it was not a problem. Dennis was able to get back to the hall with a new dictionary for the other boy before he left. And he is very pleased that you are so enamored (look that one up) of your dictionary. All of us wish that everyone in the hall had your thirst for knowledge.

Malcolm X

Malcolm X was from Lansing, Michigan. His name has an X because his last name was Little, which was a slave name. So he Xed it. A lot of Muslims do this so that when they get to heaven, Allah will give them a holy name. Malcolm X didn't like white people.

-Nathan

From The Beat: We don't know too much about who Malcolm X liked, or didn't like. But we do know that when he was sent to prison, he used his time to educate himself. The word is that he learned every word in the dictionary. When he was released, he used his vast vocabulary to inspire countless numbers of people. Whether one likes what he was saying, or not, it's impossible not to admire how well he used his time when locked up, and his bottomless thirst for knowledge.

Cupid Attacked Me

A bow shot my heart with an arrow, just as if Cupid had attacked me.

Confusion came, but dignity did gain.

You're like a forest with an enchanted garden – a solution for hate,

which then becomes love, with humor, respect, and acknowledgement.

It sizzles the stage with hotness, sexiness, and absolutely, no weariness.

-Alexander

From The Beat: Hey, who is this Cupid person? Shooting arrows at people is against the law, isn't it? Maybe he (she) has friends in high places.

Another Day

It's another day in this mini-jail. Educating myself, because knowledge is power. I'm acknowledging myself. Life is short. I'm hoping for the best and preparing for the worst. Wondering if things will go right in court. Still sitting here, bored, but showing myself in a professional manner. Looking at time in YA. I'll be out one day.

-D

From The Beat: Wherever you go, you can pursue your education. And if you do that, you will never be bored. Try learning three new words a day. At the end of a year, you'd have over a thousand new words in your head.

Money

Money don't give you heart. If you got money, you can still be a mark. I know people who got money this and that, but when you approach them one on one, they could never be caught throwin' up theirs. What I have learned is that my downest pal, who used to have nothin', but now has money – he's still got heart.

-Nathan

From The Beat: Well Nathan, he sounds like a real friend. Just make sure that when you borrow money from each other – it's clean money. The dirty kind lands you in juvy, where you write pieces like this for all of us to read.

Pictures

Well, to me, the pictures I have are valuable. They mean a lot. I have a lot of pictures of my family and friends. When you are locked up, it's a time when you especially like to have pictures of your loved ones. Sometimes you don't get to see them, but you have pictures of their smiling faces and that makes you feel good.

-Picture Me

From The Beat: Right you are. Pictures serve a good purpose. But they won't solve your essential problems. For that you first have to be honest about identifying and naming your problems. Then you have to develop a plan to solve them. Are you ready for that?

What I Do

I attack bricks when I'm mad,

jump off cliffs, drink coffee,

and dance in the dirt

with dollars in my pocket.

My garden of gifts is great.

I request signs for solutions.

I request a rain of song

over the homes of politicians.

-Dennis

From The Beat: Holy cow – you can do all that, when you're mad? What can you do when you're happy?



A Picture

Well, I have one picture in mind. The picture I cherish the most is of me and my mom and my grandma (RIP). It's special to me because in that picture it was the last time I was with my grandma. After that she left for Mexico, and two months later, she passed away.

-Miguel

From The Beat: We can see why you cherish that photo. Keep it in a safe place. Make a copy of it when you get out.

Bringing Back The Dead

So many days, it doesn't feel the same.

I think about you, man,

every time I hear your name.

I think about that day

they told me you were gone.

I did not get your call yesterday.

I knew something was wrong.

So, it's just me and my brother,

just trying to make do.

But it's really hard without you.

We all miss you, and our love won't stop.

Time has come today – I love you Pops.

-Chris

From The Beat: We are so sorry for your loss, Chris.

Money can't fix...

My love for you
Can't even buy me a real diamond ring
Money can't fix my broken heart
That shattered into millions of pieces
Money is what you call your love, okay
Can money buy you a true down girl?
Didn't think so
Money can't fix your life
Not even if you were in debt
Can money fix you to get out of metal bars from escape?
Money can't fix anything
It brings nothing but trouble
Money can't fix anything
Think twice

- Diamond
From The Beat: Money might be able to buy that diamond ring, but you're right it can't fix a life. Thinking twice might help in making better choices. Take that extra time to think twice before you do something.

Bringing back the dead

The day my homie Juvie died was about the hardest day of my life. I remember it like it was yesterday. I was at the store with my mom and I got a call form the homies saying "Juvie was dead". I was like, I can't take this, it seems like every time I turn the corner another homie of mine is dead. All I know is that I was lucky enough to know him, and to always keep him in my prayers. R.I.P Juvie, we love you homie.

-Paradise
From The Beat: Don't let his death go in vein; make a change now so you can better your life. Don't put yourself in his place.

Bringing back the dead...

This is going out to all the homies - Crime, Juvie, Serve. You homies were more like brothers too me. I wake up each morning freaked out, knowing that you are gone. It's not the same, and it sure does hurt me.

I think to myself, if only I was there I could of done something, but life sucks. We can't go back in time, if only I could, brothers, I would ask God to go back in time. I love you and miss you so much... I'll never forget you, I promise, Loved

-Paradise
From The Beat: Paradise, were not sure what happened to your "homies", but had you been there would you have found the same fate they did?

A Wish

I wish I could go back in time to change the situation I'm in right now. I say that because I've been doing a lot of stupid stuff in my life.

I wish I could take everything back so I could do everything right, so my family could be happy and proud instead of being disappointed all the time. I would stay away from the wrong crowd, and go back to school and really try to learn instead of just wasting my life.

Now it's really hard to change because of all this crap I'm used to doing. Missing a lot of years of school makes it really hard for me to catch up. I wish I could take it all back. It would make everything much better and easier. It was very fun for a moment, but now I regret it all. It's just a wish a wish that I hope it could come true.

- Joker
From The Beat: You may not be able to go back in time, but it sounds like you know all the things you need to change. Start to work on the things you mentioned one day at a time and your wish will come true.

Support

There are a lot of people who believe in me, and that's a good thing because I need positive people in my life. To believe in me and to tell me that they want to see me do good, because if I don't have that in my life then I would probably continue to do all the bad stuff that I have been doing.

Hopefully by having support in my life for the first time in my life I can change my life before I end up dead or in prison for the rest of my life. Sometimes in life we have a choice to be free or choose to see. The choice is yours to make, but only you can decide if you want to live or die. You keep asking me why but what can I say? Cry or shed a tear that means you have fears. Life isn't easy so don't try to make It pleasing. It's going to be hard no matter how far apart you are.

-Joker
From The Beat: We couldn't have said it better. Hold to your support, and do your best not to let them or yourself down. Remember the choice is yours and yours alone.

Why me?

I have failed my family, God, and other people who love me. The most important person I have failed is my relationship with Samantha. I got locked up, and do drugs. They all wanted me to do good, but it was hard for me to because I'm always a big mess up. I have lost all of the people who loved me.

I can't believe that God forgives me for everything I have done. I wasn't there when my girl needed me more then anything in the whole world. Sometimes I wish I could take everything back, so I could be there for her and my family. My life is so hard without her to help me out with things in my life. I woke up in a cell and I'm going through hell. No support from my family, I never receive any mail. How can this happen to me, coming back here is insanity. I know I'm taking the wrong dam path, but I'll still walk it feeling hell'a sad.

-Joker
From The Beat: You mention that it's insanity for going back into the D-home? How many times have you been there? How many times has your family been there trying to keep you out? Your loved ones can only do so much, but if you choose to ignore them that's your choice, and a choice you have to live with.

Just before I went to sleep last night I thought about....

How cold and lonely my cell is with these white walls
Closing on me my door don't open with a handle
It's controlled by a button
"Click" Is what I hear
Stand on your line is an everyday thang
Last night before I went to sleep I thought about
Is this supposed to be discipline or a lesson?
Sometimes I laugh cuz
This is how homies want to be remembered as
A jail bird
My head runs in circles
What do I want?
Consequences come in different packages
So just before I went to sleep last night
I thought about a
Doughnut!

-Diamond
From The Beat: Very good poem, it's amazing the little things a person miss when everything is taken away from them.

Just before I went to sleep last night I thought about

The day becomes night
The night becomes day
My life changes with every kiss
You take my breath away
My heart doesn't beat because it's afraid you will leave
With every hug, my soul is one with you
Could you be my true love?
I get weak to my knees
And thank God for you and me
I wake up every morning hoping you don't leave
Through words I hope you stay here with me
Because my heart can't take someone else leaving me
So I sit in my room crying every night
Because I feel your love fading away from me and dying
I hope you see how I feel because my heart is
True to you and that is for real
You see my hurt, pain, and love
You're so true to the way you love
That I can't leave you because I get so weak
When I look in your eyes I know you need me

-Shawnta
From The Beat: When you're on the out's doing what you're doing, is it worth the loss you are going through now? Every day is about a choice; remember this poem when you get out.

Freeway

All the time that has passed by
Thinking of you day and night
There's not one moment I don't think of you
I just wish I had one more day to kick it with you
Your mom still cries and feels sad
With every day I just keep getting mad
There's just one more thing I got to say
Don't trip, 'cause I'ma see you one day
RIP, Barvitas
(He was driving on the freeway and some bangers drove by and shot him three years ago. He was only 25 years old.)

-Leches
From The Beat: We're so sorry your friend lost his life this way. What is gained by this ongoing destruction? One by one, a whole generation of young men is being lost to the violence of other young men. If you wanted to put a stop to all the killing, and you had the power of government, what would you do?

Tired Of The Phoniness

Damn, I'm tired of all this phoniness, acting like they're your homie, saying that they got your back, then they stab you in the back. I don't get it. Why they act like that, homie? Why can't they just say we ain't homies, 'cause I don't like you, instead of acting to be your homies? Then out of nowhere they want to chunk it, 'cause they started talking shhhh first?

But you ain't trippin', 'cause it's a lesson you got to learn from it, 'cause this so-called homie or friend will stab you in the back, emotional or physical. Peace. Shaoooo.

-Baby Pitt
From The Beat: We're not sure what situation you're talking about, but maybe it's just the company you're keeping. Maybe it's just where you are. When boys are locked together, they sometimes feel like they need to front for each other to look as tough as possible. We know you can't go through life without trusting anyone, so you need to find trustworthy friends to kick it with. And the best way to find trustworthy friends is to be a trustworthy person yourself. Are you? Have you ever told someone something that you didn't mean?

This Pain

I felt a lot of pain; I think I'm going insane. I hate going to court, and hearing my name. I don't hear the other crap they say, all I hear is my name.

The DEA wants to give me hell-a-time, and it is making my mind weak. I know I messed up, but now they are trying to throw me away for some years. They do what they want, but it's all good, because they throw my people away like this everyday and it ain't no thang.

My worry is my brother. I worry about him because he's the only one that has my back, and I have his too. It doesn't help that I am away from him, and I can't see him. I miss him a lot and I am trying to be strong for him. We always tell each other that we are crazy, and the world is too, but we won't let that crap bring us down. The problem we both have is that we make bad decisions and always end up jacked up.

-Joker
From The Beat: It's good you have a strong relationship with your brother. Is he older or younger? Has he been in the D-home? If not, stick with him and maybe you will be able to stay out of the D-home by making better choices.

My 'Hood

My 'hood is a place where Latino people get along, but if someone tries to mess with the homies, they will get punked. And if you're from the wrong 'hood, you will get checked, because the truth is, we're gangsters and it's where we don't play. If you test us, you will get checked, because my homies are the best.

-G
From The Beat: We had to change your Beat name because we won't allow you to hold up your 'hood as something better than anyone else's. How silly (even childish) it sounds to talk about the "right" or the "wrong" 'hood, as if you had anything to do with being there. You could just as easily have been raised in the "wrong" 'hood, and then it would be "right" to you. Fighting over a piece of dirt that you don't own and has done nothing for you (it's just dirt!) just makes no sense at all.

Life In My Neighborhood

Man, life right now ain't right
I'm from the 'hood, but I hearin' stuff I don't like
My homie got jumped, I'm in the hall, just thinkin'
This funk life I'm in really ain't for me
Really I want my moms, but I can't have her right now
Every time I get a smile, man
Life makes me frown

-Obie
From The Beat: You make it sound like you have nothing to do with life making you frown, like you're just a leaf floating along in a stream without any ability to direct your feet along one path or another. Of course you want your mom, and she wants you! She doesn't like thinking of you as a prisoner, so can you give her the gift she's been waiting for — you at home with her to stay!

Lookin' At Bricks

Locked up one mo' time
Gettin' tired of snitches droppin' these dimes
Now I'm lookin' at bricks while I'm servin' my time

-Cody
From The Beat: Snitches are everywhere, inside and out/ So if you don't want to be here, stop what you're about/ Listen to your mama, go to school/ The only way to avoid being a juvenile hall fool!

Prostitution Is The Name Of The Game

Prostitution was the game. Well at least the game I have to play. I quit when I was 16 and started as a preteen. I could say I've been through it all from the big things to the small. But I couldn't say I knew it all especially when I was too blind to see it all. I replaced my family for some money.

That never gave me happiness. It only gave me material things that never really lasted. So now I'm here because I'm doing the right thing. I turned myself in and reunited with my family. Still, I think about the pain I used to go through. The pain I used to hide behind a smile or the places I used to go to. So when you see me now, you see that I'm always smiling but this is not fake. This is something that I go through.

-Veronica

From The Beat: We admire your courage to turn your self in and to face the problems in your life. We realize some of these problems might seem insurmountable but please remember there are people out there who want to help you work through this. You can get through this and have a life that is better than you ever imagined. You are right about prostitution; it is just a material thing and you are worth more than that.

Precious Fisher

If I could go back in time knowing what I know today, the one person I would want to see was my great-grandpa. My life would be way different if he was here today because when he was here I used to spend hella time with my grandpa but when he died my life changed and started doing hella bad stuff but I'm willing to change my ways because if he was still here he would want me to change and do good for me and my family and for the ones in JJC. Keep your heads up and you'll get home soon.

-Gilla

From The Beat: It sounds your Grandfather was a good man. You want to do everything you can to make him proud of you.; He isn't dead. Close your eyes and look inside. The dead are with us. They speak to us and we honor with each day of our lives.

Puttin' It Down

I might go to the Y
This life that I lead,
Every day I gotta ride.
A dog can't slow down
Banging in the No town.
If you coming at me fool,
Then we gotta throw down.
Another day another dollar
We don't have shot callers.
Taking out my enemies
Trying to earn my dog collar.
Big mighty azz Fresno
Center of the coast
Pants creases flamed up
Puffin on the best dro
Waitin' just to get out
To go and do the same thing
Real dogs put it down
Locked down and on the streets
So till next time
I'm gonna hold down the fort
And dream of buying things
That my family can't afford.

-Chuck

From The Beat: You have so many chances ahead of yourself. Why are you selling yourself so short? Why don't you put it down for yourself and get out of this life before it is too late to go back. The streets won't be there for you when you are six feet under.

I'ma Have To Drop Somethings

I thought about what's gonna be the first thing I'm going to do when I get out of here. I know who I wanna see first. Also, what can I do to change my life so I can be somebody in the future or maybe I can be a better person?

Who should I keep around and who should I not hang around with anymore? I really miss a lot of people and I know I can be a better person then I am now so I'm going to try and change. When I get out, I'm not going to do something stupid to end up back here. I'ma have to drop somethings to gain more. Love always.

-Baby

From The Beat: We like that line "I'ma have to drop somethings to gain more." That's so true. Sometimes we have to take two or three steps back to get a running start so we can hurdle some obstacle or sometimes we need to drop some weight so we can feel better about ourselves and then sometimes, we need to drop some people who are bad influences.

The Way It Is

It's a whole lot of pain
Bullets dropping like rain
The whole worlds a gang
Why you think we still lookin' for Husain?
But they say hoods is to blame
For killin' innocent people
America do the same, but still we ain't equal
We do it for the block
Holdin' that sixteen glock
They do it for American soil
But really killing ninjas for oil
And hoods don't know how to escape
Steady smokin' grapes
And presidents don't know how to run
That's why we got so many bums
How are we supposed to come?
What we destined to be?
Waking up in the morning and that's all we hear and see?

-Sidni

From The Beat: It takes the small communities everywhere to make the big changes. Sitting back and complaining isn't considered helping that change to happen. People have to want better lives for themselves and respect themselves to earn respect in return.

Hear My Mind

Dodgin' automatic clips and getting robbed,
For they chips is enough to make a rookie
Wanna slit both of his wrists, because it is hard to
Survive with a solitary mind. Now I'm
Writin' all these rhymes. Prayin' I don't hit
The Y. But the God that I pray to never
Seems to hear my cries. All he catches
Are my lies and commandments I ignore.
All I keep in my mind is the gang I do
It for. When I'm in court and the judge seems
To think that I am scared, all I do is fight
The tears and show my mom that I'm
Prepared. And when my attitude is noticed
The shhhh is used against me. It seems
That every time I turn the DA
Is trying to get me. Nothing else for me to do
But sit back and do my time. All I ever ask of you
Is just relax and hear my mind.

-Anthony

From The Beat: If you don't show emotion because you don't regret what you have done, that is used against you because you have learned nothing from it. There is nothing wrong with being strong, but you have to know how to use that strength, at the right time.

Love always Nana and Tata

My nanas name is Jeannie and she died of lung cancer and a heart attack. She was my world. When she died I was 16 years old. It was over 10 years ago. After I found out she died, my mom wouldn't let me go to her funeral. I was so mad at her.

I was mad because Nana left me without saying goodbye. I think if she was alive I would be a whole different person. I wouldn't be so angry and I wouldn't be locked up all the time. When Nana was alive I was young and I took life for granted but now I don't have grandparents, my mom or dad. I really hold on to the little things in life I just wish I could tell her I love her one last time and give her a hug and a kiss good-bye. After she died my whole family split up. Everybody hates each other in my family. She is the only one who held my family together.

The next person I would bring back would be my Tata. When he died I was there to tell him good-bye. I was hecka hard for me because I seen him when he died and he told me to take care of my dad. I promised him I would.

At the funeral there was a big fight between the whole family and I felt so bad because it was right in front of his body. After he died, I started to get out of control. I know if he was alive, I would not have done all the crazy stuff I have done. If he was still alive I would tell him how sorry I am for not being there for my parents.

If Tata was alive, I know my dad wouldn't drink so much and do so many drugs. I know deep down if he was here I would always be home with my family and not all doing my thing on the streets.

-Chica

From The Beat: We offer our condolences. It is very hard to lose a loved especially those who were so central to the family. With the grandparents departure, it is now time for the sons and daughters to step up and to lead the family and to hold the family together. It is on each of us and we must do our part because those who came before us did their part.

Keepin' It Real

Just before I went to sleep last night
I thought about when I was on the run.
How me and my homie were doing it big,
Trying to stay in the game without getting caught up.
Then I started to count sheep,
I got all the way to 2,316 before I got tired and then slept.

-Ghost

From The Beat: We think that you were lucky to get caught up, because if death catches you up, there is no second chance to do it again. Know that if you don't put work into your own life, no one else will do it for you.

Just Want To Go Home

Sitting in JJC, crying every night thinking about being here.
Doing time I wouldn't think twice about.
Remember, I'm only 16.
See how much I miss my family
Their smiles, laughs, jokes and especially their tears.
I see this in my mind.
What I want to do is go home and be alive again.
Sincerely, Shy girl.

-Yancy

From The Beat: It's a lot to have to think about everything we've done and what we will do especially when you are just 16 but this is where your life is so this is what you must deal with. We realize this may seem like an unsurmountable problem. We've been there. The only way to deal with our life and to clean up our mess is to turn and face it and begin to take steps towards changing it.

18 Baby!

I am finally 18. The destiny judge is letting me off. I've been coming here since I was 12 years old. Now, I will finally be out of the system. I am so happy. I am done being that little kid. I have to finally grow up and get out of this little world I have been in for so long. I am too old for these little kid games. I have a different point of view of everything even life so me and my family are all happy together and we have a new baby coming into our family.

-Kid

From The Beat: Congratulations. Sounds like everything is going well for you. We wish you the best and hope you have reflected on your life situation and the actions you repeated that kept you returning to this place you dislike so.

Shygurl

I've known Shygurl since the 9th grade. We've been best-friends or as I say "homegirls" since then. I love her with all of my corazon and she loves me too. She is down for me and I am down for her. We do anything possible for each other. She makes everything so much better but I moved and we still talk and everything, including Myspace. But I haven't seen her since April. I send her letters but when she sends my mom throws them away. I never get to read them. My mom doesn't know how special our friendship is. She is Shygurl and I am Crazygurl. We miss each other like crazy but like I told her when I'm 18 years old, I'm gonna pick her up and give her the best hug ever. I love you Shygurl!

-Crazygurl

From The Beat: Love is a mighty wonderful thing. We wish you the best of luck in reuniting with your loved one. God bless.

Just Backing Govt. Funds

Just before I went to sleep last night I thought about Graffiti. I thought about all of the things that people say when they see it.

I see the life of someone else.
People say it costs money for the things we do.
So why are you complaining about it?
To me, graffiti is another way of rocking the govt.'s money
So feel free to express yourself
When you go bombing that wall
Or even when you put that tip on that can
Just remember that getting fame
Is just another way
Of just rocking govt. funds.

- Graffiti Artist

From The Beat: It's not just the fact that it costs money to cover up graffiti, it is the also the fact that it shows disrespect to all who do have to pay for it, when no one asked them if it could be done. Just as much as you think you have the freedom to express yourself, so too do others know they have the freedom to not be forced to look at it.

Going Home

Just before I went to sleep last night I thought about going home next week. I was real worried about what my mom is going to say or what she's going to do. I'm scared to go home because I don't think my parents want me home. Well that's all. I'm out. Peace.

-Kathryn

From The Beat: We don't know your situation but we know families are suppose to be supportive and loving. We are to expect our families to welcome us back. Our families are supposed to provide us with a home but sometimes it is not like that. Sometimes our families are not like that.

If I Could Turn Back Time

Knowing what I know today, the one person I would bring back from the dead is my grandpa. My life would be better than it is now. It will be so good to see him. I love him so much. My grandpa meant the world to me and still does. I'm going to change my ways, not just for me but also for my grandpa. If he was here I wouldn't be acting this way. If my grandpa was here today I would tell him how much I love him and how I wouldn't be able to feel the way I do without him being here.

I would have wanted my grandpa to tell me to set an example for all the ones that are doing bad and need help.

For the ones doing time, keep your head up because one day it's going to be your time to shine.

-Jasmine

From The Beat: Your grandfather sounds like a good man. We believe the dead are buried but they still communicate with us through prayers, dreams and sometimes they just speak to us. We hear their voices in the wind and they free us to live the good life they would want.

When I Get Out

Straight out the No,
Steady blasting motha fools with a forty four.
Always runnin' from the po po.
Fresno 'ain't no joke, talking head
Will only get that body smoked.
It's always gonna be pop pop
Then you drop.
That's what I am going to do when I get out.

-Adrian

From The Beat: We ask you to think about killing, violence, and your involvement in it. Is all that violence a cop out from living a life of creating and building rather than destroying? Think about it. If all you know is how to shoot and kill, but you don't know how to take the time to make positive things happen, how can you choose to do better? There are so many constructive things that you could do with your life and you can do for others. Who will be there for you when you need to be put in the ground?

When You Mess Up

Well, the thing I was thinking about last night was smoking.
If I hadn't smoked then
I wouldn't be here right now.
I did have a job,
But I am pretty sure that they fired me.
So when I get out I have to go think
Of a way to get my life straight.

-Nik

From The Beat: You don't have to get out to think of ways to fix your situation. You can do that right where you are. You can make one plan at a time and remember the Hall when you forget what you could face if you don't do right by yourself on the outs.

Hey what's up Beat?

It's me Josh. I'm writing from these wall's again. Trying to survive and work my way out of the system to support my expecting and soon to be wife. What I really want to say is I ain't guilty so I should be out. The main thing is Jesus has made a plan for me to get out of gangs and Jesus gave me a second chance. So I'm gonna take this second chance to the heart and stick to the bible and worship the Lord Jesus Christ.

-Joshua

From The Beat: The Lord works in strange ways. When we give our lives to him, we have given our lives, therefore it is not our place to demand or question but rather, to accept the mission our life presents in front of us.

Dear Grandma

I thought about Grandma last night. She was always there for me and has taken care of me since I was 8 months old. For the past few months I have been really rebellious. I guess it is from holding so much pain inside because I feel like my parents abandoned me. I would give anything to have my mom and my dad back in my life but all I have is my grandma. If I could take it all back, I would. I don't enjoy hurting as much as it may seem and I just really want to tell her that I am sorry.

-Myisha

From The Beat: Sometimes our challenge is to abandon our own wishes and to accept what has been offered to us already. You already seem to appreciate what your grandmother has done for you. Treat her with respect and make good memories with the time you have with her.

Love for another

Just before I went to sleep I wrapped myself in my blanket. It's my fault I'm in here.
After I said my prayers I still felt empty. I realized what I was missing, I have an amazing boy.
He holds me close and makes me smile.
So, as I wiped away the tears. I know he's thinking of me.
He's the best boyfriend I've ever had.

When I'm a parent I'll treat each day like my whole life's work in front of me.
I would try my best to teach wrong from right.
I would show my child to best path to be on.
I would hold my kids close and never let go.

Mostly, if I was a parent
I would ask for help to handle a child I can't control.
I'm not a parent though and I know why.
I'm still young, learning wrong from right.
If only my parents could learn
to handle a child who is out of control.
I have me and for now that is my pride and joy.

-Jaymee

From The Beat: It is the ultimate freedom to feel for others and to love them more than we love ourselves. By loving them we are no longer concerned with our needs and by sharing in their joy we are joyful.

The Life As A Gangbanger

I like stealing dogs, mainly dogs. I breed them. They are fighters. I never fight 'em. I just sell them. I steal cell-phones too. I take 'em out of cars and sell them for 50 or 60 bucks. I go to the swimming pool parks and take the cell phones when they go in the pool.

I'm not scared to get caught because I gangbang. I bang because I know people got my back and they help me out. I got caught stealing a bike once. My friend and I threw up where we were from. They tried to fight and my friend pulled out a 9mm and shot in the air and they ran away.

I'm in Juvi for the 7th time. I'm angry I can't see my mom. I gotta watch my back every time I step out the door. I gotta be careful what I choose. I got my brother and we bang different gangs but we get along so when I got to Juvi, I'll plan something big like usual.

-Block

From The Beat: We are no sure if you notice at the end of your piece, whether you did it on purpose or not, you started to write about the negative consequences of your actions. You cannot see your mother or your family, you have to watch your back everywhere you go, and you have to be careful who you choose to talk to. The price to pay your behavior is not only being locked up, but it is also not being able to be with your loved ones and living a life where you are limited to experiencing the world in a narrow way.

Almost a Miracle

Well I went to court and was worried because my recommendation was 3 years in CYA. Well, when I was in the courtroom I got the miracle that I have been praying for the whole time. Well not exactly, but the judge said that he didn't agree with the recommendation, which was the miracle. The judge postponed my sentencing because he wants me to take a psych evaluation. If I pass the evaluation I have a good possibility of just getting time here in commit. All I'm saying is that praying does work so trust God.

-Seth

From The Beat: We are happy you found a way to get closer to God. We hope you realize that a psych evaluation is serious. Take the initiative to look after yourself.

I'd Bring You Back

If I could bring anybody back from the dead, I would bring back my cousin. I would just have a long talk with him about how he got killed and tell him what's been going on in my life. But most likely I would just come to tears. If he was alive he would say stay in school and keep my mom safe.

-Raymond

From The Beat: We are sorry for your loss, and we hope that someday you see that the best way to honor those you have lost is to live right by their memory. If you know what he would say to you, honor that.

RIP Cisco

Hey Beat, do you want to know who I would bring back from the dead? I would bring back my dad. My dad was shot and killed, and he died in my arms. It has been about seven months now and I've been hating life. I feel alone. I still have my mom, brothers and sisters, but the day he died, I lost my best friend!

I would do everything with my dad. You name it, we did it! And now my life feels empty. I'm going crazy. It feels like just yesterday we were kicking back. People who I thought were my friends turned out not to be and they shot my dad.

If I could bring him back, I would just talk to him one more time and I would tell him I love him and I'm sorry. I'm sorry for hanging out with the people he told me not to. He told me they did not care about me, but I did not listen. And look at me now?! I lost the person I love the most! I just want to say, "I'm sorry dad". And to everyone who reads this, choose your friends wisely.

-Samuel

From The Beat: We're saddened to hear about your dad's death, so recent in your memory too. Losing people who are close to us is never an easy thing to bear, but the important thing is keeping their memory alive. We know it was painful for you to share this story with us, so thank you for having the courage.

Rest In Peace

If I could bring someone back, I would bring back my brother. He dies at the age of fifteen. If he was alive today, I know that I would not be in the Hall today. The day that he died I lost all faith in life. If he was alive today I would tell him that I love him. So all of those of you who have brothers, you better tell them that you love them.

-Blobs

From The Beat: It's always such a hard thing to understand when anyone dies before their time, especially when they are as young as your brother. If you know that you would not be in the Hall if he were here, then honor him by changing the path of your own life, and bring faith and hope back to your family through you.

Do Right

Just before I went to sleep last night
I said that I want to go home
And not come back to the hall.
And that I don't want to be bad no more.
I need to change but I will be
Coming here all my life though.
I want to be someone
So I need to do the right things.
My mom taught me to do the right thing
But I don't so I am in here.

- Struggling Kid

From The Beat: Change is hard. It isn't something that you just want to happen, you have to need it to happen just like you need to eat and sleep. Find strength in dreaming for more and better, and take it one step at a time.

True Love

My name is D.J. And I'm 16. I have a wife and a 10 month old daughter. My wife's name is Nital and she's my little Honey-Bear. So, that means I'm her BIG papa-bear. Our daughters are named Melody and she's our little booger. Nital is my everything and I love her so much. We have something really good going on. It's like a feeling I have never felt. I love her this much. This is for you Boo. I love you.

-Papa-Bear

From The Beat:Well we wish you all the best and we hope you can be reunited with your love and family.

That's What regret Means

When I was at home with my mom, I was on the monitor and it wasn't working good so my P.O. called my house and the told my grandma to bring me in so they could check my monitor. I got ready and when we were driving over, my mom and I were talking as we got to the hall. When we were waiting, I was thinking, I hope they don't lock me up. They called my name and when I walked up in the office, they told me to get on the wall and they searched me and put the handcuffs on me. I asked them, "what were they doing?" they said, "you're going in for violation."

Before they took me in, I wanted to tell my grandma I love her but I was too sad to tell her. I felt in my heart that if I would have told her I loved her, I would have cried because I was sad. I didn't want to be away from my grandma because she's the only person that ever loved me and cared for me.

I regret not telling my Grandma that I love her but the good thing was when I was in booking I got to talk to her and she told me she didn't know they were going to do that. They tricked her and I believed her because I know she wasn't lying. I had to get off the phone but at least, I got tot ell her I love her.

Now that I'm in here, I pray 6 times a day for God to release me to my mom and I claim my grandma as my om because she took me and my brothers and sisters before CPS took us. I just thank my mom so much for taking me in and that's what's happening. I love my mom so much and I miss her so much and I miss my brothers and sisters and my family so much too. I love you mom AKA grandma.

-Daniel

From The Beat: It is very nice that you have so much love for your Grandmother. She seems like a wonderful and selfless person. She didn't have to do anything but she did everything she could. That is a good person who deserves to be treated with the same consideration, generosity and support.

What Life Equals

These walls equal one cell
Juvenile hall equals hell
Can't eat so I'm not strong
I'm thinking what the hell am I doing wrong?
I need to calm down and live right
or end up in a hearse with no life?
Moma keeps telling me “graduate.” Get
a diploma. Do good. Basketball coach tells
me I got enough game to get out the hood
So I'm ready to get on a plane
take it up a step
Show moma I'm the best yet to be
I too high. You can't touch me.

-Terrance

From The Beat: We hope you can accomplish the things you want to but we believe your mom is already proud of you and she loves you no matter what you do.

What's On JB's Mind?

What's good with it Beat Within? Once again it's your Boy Lil' Joey Boy from the World's biggest little city in the U.S.A. You ain't knowing? The Fresno baby!
I went to court on the other day and I got boot camp again for the third time. Damn! Delta again but it ain't nothing to a guerilla like me. Just do this time and handle business and get ghost asap. Yep! I'm gone . Be gone for a little vacation but to all doing time “Do the time, don't let the time do you.” Feel me?

-Lil' Joey Boy

From The Beat:We like that you have a plan to get out and to stay out of Juvi hall. Do your time and put it to use. Do something. Learn something. Pick up some skills. Be constructive.

Precious Picture

The picture I carry in my wallet is of my girl. We have been together for over a year. I like this picture because she took it at school. Her hair and her clothes and her upper body parts make her look beautiful. The first time I saw her, I wanted to get with her so bad but I was too scared. Me and my friend went to her house. I was going to ask her out. I was scared but I asked and she said yes.

-Flaco

From The Beat:Hey, that's a great story. We're glad you were able to share love with someone. Too bad you're locked up and away from her. If I was with someone I really loved, I would do whatever it took so I never get split up from her. Good luck.

What Regret Means

When I was in Mexico I regretted that I never told my mom that I loved her. I regretted to come back because when I came back. I was only in town for three months and I had a conflict with my brother and he told the cops I had a warrant and the officer put me in handcuffs and read me my rights.
I regretted coming back and took care of my problems but since I didn't . I got caught up. I hope the people I hurt will forgive me, and if they don't I forgive them. Everyday that goes by, I can't forget what happened.

-Moses

From The Beat: We know regrets. We've had a few and we know God put eyes in the front of our heads. So we look forward and not backwards. We have to learn from our mistakes and do what we have to do. It does no one any good to beat ourselves up because of something we didn't do. Take action Hombre. Write a letter to your mama right now.

They say I should say

I want to get out of here
I want to go home and be happy
But how can I?
Life is suffering. How can I ever be happy?
No drugs? No drinking? No stealing cars?
What will I eat, cottage cheese and be good
When my Glauck is hot in my pants
My mom wants me to mow the lawn
I want to boot heroin for the first time.

-Andrew

From The Beat:Often what we think is not the best thing to do. We often think about not paying our taxes but we know the punishment will be worse. No one is saying you shouldn't be honest and honor your feelings but if our feelings are directing us to do destructive behavior then maybe we shouldn't listen to ourselves.

My Dream

Last night, when my mom visited, we were talking about what I'm going to do when I get out of here. She was telling me that it hurts her deep down inside her heart that I come here and get into trouble. All she wants from me is to do right in school and stay out of trouble because it makes her very sad when she hears the stuff I do. I'm going to show her that I can stay out of trouble because I can.

My mom told me I have potential and I do. She wants me to use it right and live my dream. I want to play football in the NFL someday and play for my favorite team, the Raiders.

I can't wait until I get out so I can eat some good food, sleep in my comfortable bed, go on the computer, and watch my TV. I'm going to do good for my mom, brothers and sisters and get my diploma. I hope to go to college and then try out for the NFL.

-Roman

From The Beat: We're glad you had this talk with your mom. She sounds like a wonderful and motivating force in your life. Your dream of playing for the NFL will take a while, but it could happen if you keep working hard.

Just Praying

Before I went to sleep last night, I was thinking about my family and my girl. I was wondering if they think about me before they go to sleep and at the same time was thinking about what the judge told me at court. When I went, they were telling me that my max could be up to four years at YA. Just having that thought in my head everyday before I go to sleep, I hate thinking about it.

I just wonder everyday if I'm going to see my family and girl soon. I just pray everyday when I go to sleep that I get out of here. I hope my next court date goes good. I miss my family and my girl. I pray I will see them soon. I love you guys!

-Victor

From The Beat: We hope everything goes well for you. It's tough not knowing what could happen next. We're praying for you!

Before Sleep

Just before going to sleep last night I thought about being out and havening fun with my family. I also thought about playing games with my little brothers and going out to the park with them and having fun.

-Salvador

From The Beat: Having people in your life that you choose to be there for, and want you to be around can be motivation to do better the next time around. Keep your head up and take it one day at a time.

I'm In Love With Her

If I were to leave or move away (which I actually am)...I would tell my best friend Jessika that I have been in love with her since 7th grade...I have always been afraid to let her know because I did not want to ruin the friendship but she is the only one who knows the true me.
She sticks by me through good times and bad. I really do love her but I'm moving across the country in a month and I got out in little less than a month. I plan on telling her before I leave. If she feels the same I will come back for her.. I really hope she feels the same...If not...I will still come back for her.

-Jake

From The Beat: Love is a mighty splendid thing. We wish you the courage and strength to express your emotional truth to this young lady. Good luck and remember, all you can do is put it out there and offer to show her a good time. She will decide the rest.

When I Get Out

Just before I went to sleep last night, I was thinking about hella things. One thing on my mind was what I was first to do when I get up out of here. I want to enroll at a charter school and finish school and get a job so I won't have to slang anymore. I probably won't be all goodie-goodie but at least I'll be trying more.

Another thing I want to do is stop messing with a bunch of girls because it gets me caught up and then brings drama. I am going to find a girl who has a whip and a job so that she is on my level. Plus so that I can spend time with her rather than doing bad things.

Another thing that was on my mind was about what I am going to do in my future because I am first to turn 18 and my mom is first to kick me out. But yea, that's what was on my mind.

-Nino

From The Beat: Thanks Nino, it sounds you're on track to do better for yourself. You've got great ideas here, and you sound like a smart guy. Keep at it!

What Should I Do?

Just before I went to sleep last night, I thought about whether I should do it or deny it. But as thoughts rushed through my mind, it was a hard for me to think too much. It all happened when one of my rivals started disrespecting me in the pod I was in. It was hard for me to fall asleep as my rival would think about what he's going to do to me tomorrow. Now I am in a different pod. But as for me like always, should I do it or deny it? Or just do my time?

-Chico

From The Beat: It doesn't sound like there is an easy answer, but the good thing at least is that you are taking time to think things through rather than just react and make a poor decision. How can you use these "thinking" abilities to your advantage when you're on the outs?

All These Thoughts

Just before I went to sleep last night, I thought about the outside world and my family. And then I still couldn't sleep because thinking about my family in here is like a drug. I can't stop doing it.
I tried to read a book but it didn't help at all. I also thought about my friends and my room and my bed and my mom's cooking. But the thing I thought about the most was being straight with the Lord.

-Joseph

From The Beat: It's hard to concentrate when we have all these thoughts running in our heads. What is something that makes you happy when you think about it?

I Would Never Do It That Way Again

I thought about my dad and how much I care about him and how much I love him. I'm locked up because I got in a fight with my dad. I don't know why I did that but now I realize how much I miss him. I didn't mean to hurt my dad but what I know is it was a big mistake. I know I don't belong here. I'm a good person who likes to go to school and play sports. If I could go back, I would never have fought my dad and I would never have been here. It's my first time here and I don't like it but I have to live with it. I hope I get out soon to be with my family and friends.

-Lash

From The Beat: Like they say blood is thicker than water. What we do with our family will never be forgotten. That is why we put our family first and we always behave in a way that considers our mothers and fathers.

Keepin' It Crazy Daisy

Fresno is my home. I grew up in these streets where I did my first crime. I got put in a gang and now I have to do what I have to do. I'm in the hall again and waiting to go to court. Hopefully I get my charges dropped so I can go home. There are fools here who run their mouth a lot but when it comes down to fighting, they act like females. I'm just gonna stay on my toes and keep it crazy daisy. To the homies doing time, stay up and much love!

-Jaime

From The Beat: We realize it can be frustrating sometimes because of other people's actions. But don't let their actions get the best of you. It's totally not worth having to do more time.

I Have Two Pics

Both in Disneyland. My favorite is a picture just after my dad proposed to my step-mother. In that picture, the four of us [my dad, Step-Mom, Little Brother & me] are on the Mark Twain boat on the Tom Sawyer river. My grandma took it. My little bro was 2 years old. I was 6 years old.

The 2nd is me and my step-mom dancing in from of Indiana Jones and the Temple of the forbidden eye ride in fantasy island. My step-mom had just gotten her bride Miney Ears. My dad is in the background with his groom Mickey ears.

-Memories

From The Beat: Sounds like a nice memory. It's always easy to remember the good things. We always forget the bad things. That's the way life is. It's reassuring because we know at the end of it all, when we are on our rocking chair looking back over the events of our lives, we will only remember the good stuff and leave the rest.

Positive Thoughts

Before I went to sleep last night, I thought about many things. At first I was thinking negative thoughts about what might happen in the future. Then I realized I was getting sad and angry. So I began to think positive.
I thought about what changes I could make for the better. I thought about doing good wherever I went after I got out of the Hall. I thought about how to do good and change to go home, and be successful in society. I thought about being in a public high school for the first time. I had a lot more things I was thinking about but not enough time to tell them. I learned thinking positive thoughts help you to sleep well.

-Bradley

From The Beat: Right on! Having a positive outlook will surely be in your best interest. There are so many things running through your mind right now, and staying focused will help. You've got a bright future ahead and many things to look forward to.

Too Much Talking

This time in JJC, some of these kids be talking crap behind their doors but when they're out here, you tell them "what's up" and they'll just stay on hush mode. That's some of the crap that these wannabes do. They try to act hard behind their doors 'cause they know we can't open the door or tell the staff to open the door cause then they'll be like "for what?" and I'm not as stupid to say I want to beat that person up, and then before you know it, I'm on high security.

This story is for all those phonies. This life ain't for everyone so if you think it ain't for you then you better stop 'cause you could end up dead. Listen to my advice and do what I say and you'll have a good life.

-Pepe
From The Beat: Life on the outs is difficult, but life in JJC can be even harder because you're around many young people who are involved in gangs. What can you do to not cause any further trouble while you're in JJC?

A Competent Family Picture

A family picture is the picture I love. I felt some much of a bond when the flash hit my eyes. We all wore red and black. Then we went out to eat after we put the pictures up in the house. I felt like we were the strongest family ever.

-Terrance
From The Beat: That's a nice picture to remember. We want to remember occasions like that too.

Going Back In Time

Just before I went to sleep last night, I thought about going all the way to when I was a freshman. That's when my whole life took a turn for the worse. I started to mess up in school and started to do a whole bunch of stupid crap. My life could be a whole lot better if I could go back. My girl and I would probably still be together. I need to turn my life around because it's really hard now that I'm almost 18.

If I had hundreds of thousands of dollars, I would buy my family a house and a car so we could all be together. Even though I would have a lot of money, it would probably be kind of boring, but I would be buying hella stuff. I'm done, but I hope by writing this I can relieve and release a whole bunch of stress.

-Thomas
From The Beat: We hope this helped you relieve some stress. It's usually good to let things out rather than keep them bottled inside. It'd be great if we could all go back and fix things in our life, but all we can do is live for today and tomorrow. Don't give up on what your future could hold for you.

Down Hill

If I could bring someone back from the dead, it would be my grandpa because before he passed, we had everything that a kid wanted I promise you. But if he was alive right now, I wouldn't be in here because my life was going in a perfect straight line. I could remember when I was little and he would take me walking and buy me whatever I wanted. But then it came, that day, when my aunt's girlfriend walked in his room and he was dead from a heart attack. Ever since that day, my life just went down hill.

-Kei
From The Beat: Your grandpa sounds like he was a great man. What do you think he would have wanted you to achieve in your life? Maybe you should set a positive goal for yourself in life, like to finish school, and fulfill that goal as a way to honor his memory.

A Dead Homie

Just before I went to sleep last night, I thought about my homie. He was killed by one of my enemies. My homie was not even in a gang. He just played sports. My homie got killed at the place where he was always at since he was seven years old, and he got killed when he was 15 years old. Some of my older homies were there playing basketball, but they said that they did not know what was going on.

The only reason I think my homie got killed was because he kicked with us and they thought he was from my set. If I had the chance, I would bring back my homie and tell him I love him, that I will see him again up there. Thanks for hearing what I had to say.

-Grim
From The Beat: What a sad situation for him, to have his life taken away for something that he wasn't even a part of. We feel your pain, and we hope he knows how much you cared about him.

A Second Chance

Just before I went to sleep last night, I thought about a lot of things. I thought about the program that I just got screened for and if they are going to accept me back into the program. I was once in the program but back then, I was immature and didn't want to do anything but get high, get with girls and go to parties. So obviously I ran over the program like it was nothing but trash in the road.

They terminated me from the program and I got locked up and sentenced to a group home. I've been in and out of group homes for the last three years and ran away from most or got terminated for something that I did.

The last two group homes I was in I did good but I refused to go back to court. The judge said he wanted me home, so he sentenced me to the Wrap Around program and here I am. I was just thinking that if they didn't accept me, that I will have to go back to a group home for a year. So please pray that they find me capable of getting back on the program.

-Thor
From The Beat: It sounds like you really want that second chance. And we hope you get it! What changes will you make for yourself this time around?

Another Chance

Just before I went to sleep last night, I thought about my family and my daughter cause I wondered how they were doing. I don't want to lead my sisters and brothers, plus my daughter, in the path I'm in because I want the best for them. I want them to finish school. Why would I want my family growing up like me?

I thought about my court date because I don't want to be in here anymore. Hopefully I get out. I was saying to myself, talking to God, asking him to forgive me and to give me another chance to be with my family.

Also, I want to talk about bringing someone back from the dead. If I could, I would bring some people back. First, my great-grandparents.

Second, I would bring back all my homies that passed away from the hood. I would tell my grandparents that I love them and tell the homies that I'm down to ride before we all die. Thanks for coming Beat, and rest in peace to all homies and familia.

-Peanut
From The Beat: Thanks for writing again this week Peanut! We hope you get out soon too, and that you stay involved in your daughter's life. We really wish we could bring back your loved ones who have passed, but at least we can hope they are watching over and protecting you.

A Friend For Life

If I could go back in time, I would bring my homie Don back. Don was with me most of my life. He taught me how to function in a stable place and on the streets. When I was one year old, I was taken by CPS and placed in foster homes. He was too. So we were always with one another.

When I turned 6, he was 13. He was teaching me what he knew and I looked at him as a brother. There were a few times I saw him fight and I was scared but when he was done, he would tell me "don't trip, little homie, we cool". He started smoking and drinking and he was a gang member.

By the time I was 12 years old I was labeled a criminal. I had seen and done many things than a normal 12 year old or a grown man. I did many things, like sell drugs, had shot guns, and a lot more I shouldn't say. I did it all with him. I remember we would sit in front of the Kearney Plaza and he would tell me about the streets and he would always buy me stuff no matter what it was. If he had money, he would buy me stuff, and if he didn't, he would steal it. The truth is I loved him, but I guess you could say I was scared of him too because he was "hard".

One time, there was a boy a little bit bigger than me who wanted to fight and I was scared. So then Don told me, "Don't be a punk, little homie, go fade him up". I did, and I lost, but he gave me so much props I felt like I had won. He was always there for me and I feel I owe him, but when I tried to repay him, he said, "It's cool, pimp, we family."

And then that day came. We were on the west side, posted at a store three deep. We were lined up leaning on a Tahoe smoking and shots started. And when I started running, I tripped, and Don ran into me and stumbled back down. When the shots stopped, I looked around and realized he not only stumbled into me but he had gunshots in chest. I feel like it's my fault because the people were aiming for me. I would bring him back from the dead and tell I love him and I'm always thinking about him. RIP Don-Don.

-Devron, Fresno
From The Beat: Writing this piece about your friend Don is a great way to honor his memory and to keep him with you always. It sounds like you both were lucky to have each other, and we're sure that even in his death, he is still watching over you.

Reality Check

Today, I woke up and I got a serious reality check. You see, my mom's been stressing since September of 2007 because I haven't been home. This morning, I woke up and crap, it hit me that I'm destroying my family. My two sisters got taken from my jefita by CPS because my mom can't care for them, but deep down, I know it's because of me. That hurt.

I'm putting my three-year-old and eleven-year-old sisters through this just because I want to go out, party, mess with girls, and not obey the law. Now that I think about it, I wish I could be a square, not a lunatic. I didn't just mess up my life, but I messed up my sisters' lives and I hope they can forgive me cause this playboy just wasn't thinking. Sorry Diana and Esperanza.

-Puppet
From The Beat: Sometimes having this kind of self-realization can be painful because it forces you to acknowledge all the hurt you've caused other people. But it's only when you have these kinds of moments or "epiphanies" that you can then progress toward something more positive. Maybe you don't have to be a "square". You can still be happy as a person but also not stress your family out. Do you have any ideas as to how you can achieve this balance? Keep thinking, and maybe you'll come to realize other important things as well.

Money VS. Love

Money ain't everything but I think money will buy things or pay bills. But money ain't something you can always have. But you're more loved than money. Money is just for the government and you only can just buy clothes, shoes and other things. I would want more love than money because I want to be loved and not to be hated for my money.

-Derrick
From The Beat: Money has its benefits, but you make a great point that love can have more value than money.

Taking The Challenge

Just before I went to sleep last night, I thought about all of the difficult obstacles I have to overcome today in order to get what I want later. Then I started to think about furthering my education and I said to myself, college is going to be hard. Then an old saying went through my head, "hard work pays off". Now I am determined to go to college and take the challenge because I know it will pay off in the end.

-Steven
From The Beat: That's inspiring! When we work hard at something and achieve it, we appreciate it more rather than if it were just handed to us. Sounds like you've a great edge that's going to help you succeed in the future.

For My Dad

Growing up, my life was great. But it came to a point where I had to find out that life wasn't always going to be easy. That point came to me at the age of nine. My dad suffered a terrible accident that left him in a wheelchair for the rest of his life.

At this point in my life, I had to grow up quick to help my mom remain strong, both my brother and I. It was like we had no childhood. This was a big change for me cause I started to work little jobs to help out. But it was cool because I still had both of my parents alive.

My dad spent over five months in the hospital. It was the most terrible thing that could ever happen to me. Having to see him lay there on a hospital bed with all kinds of tubes going in and out of his body.

As I was getting older, my life was still the same. No changes. Then I started to try something to calm the pain. One thing's for sure. I thank God for giving me the mother that he gave me because she's always there for me. I would give it all to see my dad walk again. But it's cool, I've learned to deal with it and I'm trying to keep strong again.

-Oscar
From The Beat: You're parents are so lucky to have you, to know they can rely on your support in their time of need. Even if your dad never walks again, he can be proud to know he has a son who loved him very much.

I Wonder

Just before I went to sleep last night, I thought about how it is going to be when I get out of here. I thought about what I was going to do and how it was going to be when I get out. I wonder if things change or if things have still the same. When I get out, the first people I want to see are my little sisters and the rest of my family.

-Mark
From The Beat: Being stuck in JJC can make you wonder if things have changed on the outs. It'll be a happy reunion when you finally get out and get to see your family.

RIP To My Loved Ones

If I could bring back the dead, I would bring three people back that I am close to. First would be my grandma. She gave me everything I wanted. She left this world when I was 14. This was when I was young and I shed waterfalls. When I think about her, it seems like I'm sinking deeper.

The second person I would bring back is my uncle. He passed away in his sleep. I was 16 and I guess it finally hit me. It touched me because it made me realize that life was important.

The third person would be my homie. He was shot in a gang violence incident. It happened about three years ago. Three days after I got locked up. I started to think and got put in the hood. Now I'm from the hood but I want to change. I'm gonna end this by saying rest in peace to my loved ones.

-Lil Lophy
From The Beat: Sometimes from death, we learn the importance and value of life. It sounds like these people here all impacted your life in a positive way. Thank you for telling their stories.

Hope They Won't Send Me

Just before I went to sleep last night, I thought about whether my probation officer is going to send me to CYA. On top of that, this is my first time and I'm not saying I'm scared, but to do 18 months is a long time. Till next time Beat!

-Binky
From The Beat: We hope they don't send you there either. Stay strong, and please know it's okay to be scared.

Your Loved Ones

You will only love the one that you stress about when you are locked up in here. In a cell no bigger than a bathroom with a light shining on you all day. 24/7. Nothing to think about but your loved ones. So this is what I am thinking to tell all of the kids. To really love the one you love stay out of trouble. If you really love them, you will.

I hate this bleak hole. It's only my second time in here. I am looking at a year and two months for putting my intent in cement. I wake up at 6:00 o'clock in the morning and work out until 7:00. The food is gross. It sucks. Just stay out of here if you like good food and seeing your loved ones.

-Pac Man
From The Beat: Yeah, that's the thing about being locked up, it puts our lives in check. We start to realize all the posturing we had been doing and we start to appreciate the real things in life. Peace.

Lost Two

First off, I would like to say "Rest in Peace my cousin Mike." Wish I would have said more than just "see you later." It was a cold rainy day. We were at my nephew's funeral I had gotten a furb to go to it. It was cool to see my whole family but the whole situation was messed up. Lots of people were there crying. I couldn't stand it so I went outside. All the crying was hitting me. I fought to hold back tears. Finally everybody started to leave. It was time to go back to the hall when we got there. My parents got my aunt. She said my cousin was dead. Wish I could have told you more. We all miss you. God only takes the best.

-Scorpion
From The Beat:We are sorry to hear about your loss and we offer our condolences.

I Miss My Baby Girl

If I were my own parent, well first of all, I never had a father and my mom never did her job. She loved drugs more than my siblings and I, that's why I've been living in the streets either with the homies or with my baby mama. I don't ever want to be like my parents. I have never seen my so-called dad. He probably left when I was a newborn or something. The hell with both of them! I will not be like them. Even though I'm in here, I will go back to my daughter cause I know she's waiting for me. I love her with all my heart!

Just yesterday, my grandparent brought her to visit me. When I first stepped into the visiting room, she was crying, than when she saw me, she got a big smile on her face and she started laughing. That made my day! She made me feel hella good cause I know she hasn't forgotten about her daddy! I will be different from my own parents. I will take care of my daughter by being there when she needs me no matter what. Through all the hard times, whatever!

That's who I won't be like, my parents. I will be a better dad. Even though I don't know how, I will learn fast. Thanks for listening Beat!

-Bryan
From The Beat: We believe in you, Bryan, and we know you're on your way to being a great dad. This is the second powerful piece you've written about your daughter. Keeping connected to her is so important, and we hope you never lose that.

Getting Burned

The only thing that is constantly on my mind is why I'm in this dump. Everything I did on the outs was flawless. I did everything right and yet I'm here. I'm always telling myself someone had to snitch on me. When there's a reward involved, people start talking.

I guess everyone has a price and that was theirs, a homie who always came through like almost everyday. Someone had to break him off with whatever profit I got. How can they just turn their backs on me like that? So cold. Screw the haters.

I'm not tripping 'cause once I get out, it's a wrap. To all the ninjas who thought they had homies and then got burned by them, stay up! Watch who you chill with 'cause you never know when they'll burn you.

-George
From The Beat: Sorry to hear your friends weren't exactly your friends after all. In the future, what positive qualities will you look for in a friend so you don't get "burned" in the end?

Changes

I'm trapped in a world full of guns, cages, drug dealers and killers. I will never see any changes. So many people die. Rivals trying to take your life, never knowing if you'll make it through the night. You're trying to hold on but your living on the edge. Gangs and drug violence. Always looking for revenge. Life is getting hard. I'm just hoping I can take it. I just have to put all ten fingers together and hope for some changes.

-Daniel
From The Beat: We are so saddened that this is the reality many young people in your situation face, this hectic teenage life of always running and feeling hopeless. Don't give up this fight, not now, keep hoping and praying for change.

I Am My Family's Counselor

Just before I went to sleep last night, I thought about how my actions affect others. My mom got kicked out of the apartment. My little brother lost his first basketball game. My uncle got locked up in prison. Another uncle got jumped and thrown out.

I was the center of attention in the family. I came to a thought of determination, where I was, in my right state of mind thinking that because I was gone, the family was becoming corrupt.

Without me, no one can really think because I have become my family's counselor. I promised my mom that this would be last trip to JJC. Although those words were kind of complicated to say. I want to make my mom proud. I love my family. I'm going to be a big impact and make a positive influence on the whole world.

-Devonte
From The Beat: It's overwhelming to think that you are the glue that holds your family together, but it's probably true. Your family needs you, and we hope you get out soon. You are like their mentor, but here is something to think about, who is your mentor or role model? Do you have one? We hope that when things get to be too much at home you have someone to turn to for advice.

The Real, The Fakes

A man in the no is so hectic. People have to put in work in order to be respected And if you're a sucker, you'll be neglected. If I had a wish I would wish for all my dead loved ones to be resurrected And I would pray that the new life they'll have will be perfected, Without being in prison, Without their whole life collected, Because us being African Americans, We believe that in other people's minds, that's what's expected. And if we give them what they expect, Then the credit for them will be collected. But that's how things are these days, I feel as if the world is coming to an end For it's probably just me going through this phase. I don't know what it is, but whatever it is, it's messing with me. I feel like I'm locked away, but there's no key. I am trying to get out of here and get rolling like it's on four wheels with no brakes, And separate myself with the real from the fakes.

-Orlando
From The Beat: You're a talented writer. Your writing expresses the frustration of living in a society where everyday is a constant struggle. Here's a thought, how do you determine a real person from a fake?

In Five Years

Just before I went to sleep last night, I thought about where I'm going to be five years from now. It was a lot of thinking cause honestly I don't know. I had a lot of different thoughts. Some good, some bad. I thought I could be going to college or something, but then I had a thought, maybe I would be locked up again in prison.

The only reason I have those kinds of thoughts are because five years ago, if someone asked me where I was going to be in five years, I would have never said "locked up". So now I think that's where I'll be in five years.

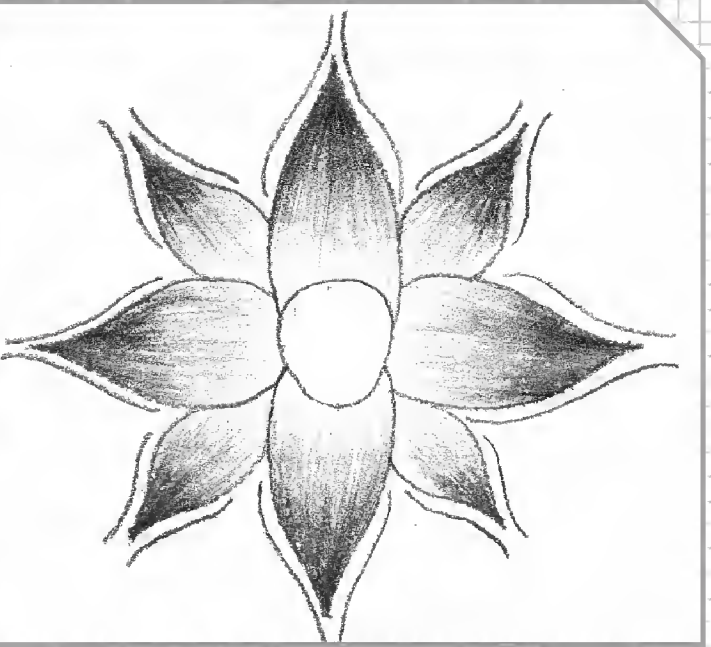
-Kenny
From The Beat: We're proud of you for asking yourself some very tough questions. We don't know what our future holds, but what we can do is plan where we'd like to be in five years and work toward that. Instead of thinking you'll be locked up again in five years, where would you really like to be?

Bringing Her Back

If were to bring someone back from the dead, it would be my grandma and if I did bring her back, I would try my best to prevent her death. I think my life would be a lot different. I would not be as bad as I am right now. I would probably not be in JJC.

The only reason I'm here is 'cause of my grandma's death. I try my best to still be here with my grandma. I would love to bring her back and to tell her a lot of things I didn't get to tell her.

-Moses
From The Beat: It hurts to lose someone you love. What would you have done to prevent her death? If she knew you were in this situation right now, how would she feel? Maybe one of the ways you can honor her memory is to do right for yourself in life. She'd be very proud of that.



Bring Back My Grandpa

If I could go back in time, I would bring back my grandpa. My grandpa died in 2006. He killed himself with a knife. I was 13 years old before I even heard about it. I was sad. I wish I could bring him back. We were like father and son. On weekends, we would ride our bikes together. We would do a lot together. I wish I could bring him back right now.

-Ricky
From The Beat: How terribly sad. We're sorry to hear you lost such a great friend, your own grandpa. Thank you for using this opportunity in The Beat to honor his memory.

My Court Date

Just before I went to sleep last night, I thought about my court date and how it is still weeks away. I thought and thought and was thinking my court date could go bad. But people always say think positive and it will come true but for me, it hasn't.

My last court date, I thought positive, but they said that I still have to go back and this time, it's for two weeks. I hope and I pray that my next court date I will think negative and hopefully it will not come true.

-Kevin
From The Beat: Don't give up Kevin. You've made it this far! Keep the hope that you will get out soon.



My Great-Grandma

If I could bring back the dead, I would bring back my great-grandma. I never really had the chance to meet or talk to her so I just want that opportunity. I want to get to know her more because I think I would be happier than what I am today.

I always think how I would have gotten along with her. And I would tell her that I love her. I would have loved to hear my great-grandma tell her she loves me. To everyone out there, I suggest you show your family love cause someday they can just pass away and you'll feel sad like I do. Stay up, much love to the Beat!

-Andrew

From The Beat: It sounds like your great-grandma would have been a wonderful person to know. You might not have had the chance to know her well, but maybe you can ask your grandparents or parents to tell you stories about her. That's a great way to keep her memory alive.

Losing My Mom

I lost my mother ten years ago. It started when she was in her twenties. She got cancer and for some reason she started smoking cigarettes to calm herself but that only made things worse. She started losing her hair and she felt like she was getting weaker and weaker.

Then her doctor told her no more tattoos or smoking, and she told the doctor okay, but then her boyfriend started coming around and he got her to get a tattoo of his name. As soon as she got it, you could say she started dying faster. She got sicker to where she had to stay in the hospital. She was in there for about a month before she died.

The thing I would tell her is that I love her with all my heart and that I will see her again sooner or later. I'd want her to tell me that she loves me and my sisters, and that she'll always take care of us whether she's alive or not.

-Michael

From The Beat: We're sorry to hear about your mom's death. It sounds like you loved and cared about her a lot. It must have been painful to watch someone you love die slowly each day. Thank you for sharing her memory with us, and we know she's probably watching over you and your sisters.

Having My Son

Trying to get my girl pregnant was easy, but when she did get pregnant, the reality hit me hard, maybe too hard. It didn't only hit me, but a lot of people around me. I thought to myself, how can I raise a kid when I haven't even finished growing up?

When he was born, I thought I would be the happiest teen alive, but I wasn't. It just made my life worse, but it wasn't his fault. I wish I could go back, but I don't regret having my son. I love him and I will be there for him when he needs me.

-Michael

From The Beat: Being a parent requires responsibility and commitment. You have to make a lot of sacrifices and work hard at it. Thank you for acknowledging that it is not an easy task. Can you think of the positive impact your son has had on you?

Bringing Back Aaliyah

If I could bring someone back from the dead, it would be Aaliyah because when her plane crashed, her pilot was on drugs and took some just before the flight. Don't be so quick to get home after every music video. In return I would ask for a date. Her songs touched my mom, like the song, Rock the Boat.

-Joshua

From The Beat: This is very sweet, Joshua, her music touched a lot of people. Thanks for reminding us that life is valuable and it can be taken away from anyone.

Doing The Right Thing

Doing the right thing still got me locked up. They told me if I get another dirty, I would get locked up. I stopped doing drugs and they told me to come in and test, but they locked me up. So now I'm sitting in here wishing I was on the outs. I go to court in a few days. Hopefully I get out so I can do my best and not come back. The right thing could still get you locked up, so to all you people locked up just keep your head up.

-Nugget

From The Beat: Good luck at court! Keep us posted on what happens. And even if doing the right thing gets you locked, KEEP doing the right thing in life no matter what and eventually things will make a turn for the better.

Me And Hard Times

Man its been hard for me the last couple of years. I've been in and out of jail, now I might be goin' down for a year or more. My b-day is in a couple of days, well in 2 weeks. But I have some stuff I wish I said to my family-the one's who are gone like my grandmother.

I miss her and before she died I wish I could of told her I love her, and me being locked up thinking bout my mom I want to be there for her and my younger sibling. But I want to learn how to be a good father to my baby that's going to be born in 4 months.

I talked to my baby mamma last night and I just want another chance with her so my baby will have its father & mom when it opens up its eyes. She told me we having a boy and I've never had a father in my life and I don't want that for my baby. I want the best and give him support and love, if she don't want me I'm still handle my responsibility as a man and I want my son to be able to call me daddy and do everything a father suppose to do in life.

Something I want to do with my son is take him out go to the playground or to the mall shopping and I want to be able to talk with him guide him down the good path and not let him follow the way I did. I don't want him in jail I want him to be able to come to me with no problem and when he needs help. I want him to be happy and have a child hood and be responsible for his actions--that's what I want for my baby boy.

I have court this month and I pray every night for the best to happen and plan for the worst but I'm running out of space to write so get at me Beat.

-Babino

From The Beat: We hear how important your loved ones are to you. With your son on the way it's time to stop going in and out of jail and be responsible for yourself so that you can live out all of your relationships. The most important thing you can do for your son is be a free man, trying to figure out life, and rising to the challenge of showing up as his father. Good luck! You have much to look forward to and work for.

I don't want him in jail I want him to be able to come to me with no problem and when he needs help.

Last Night

Just before I went to sleep last night I thought about... I was thinking that lately days been going by so slow compared to other days, its like heck.

I got two more weeks to go so I could start getting furloughs and two and a half months to kill up in New Foundations. But it's all good I can hang. HAHA. Well I don't want to say much more. That was just a minute thing that was going through my mind last night.:

-Baby L

The Beat Within: Your life is kind of on pause when you're locked up. How can you make use of your time for yourself while you're there? If you're growing as a person, the time will pass faster.



Troubled Touches

Just before I went to sleep I thought about three things....

One I thought about my family....The second thought was about my ex-...I was wondering whatever happened to that fool.....the third troubled thought is my hood, my friends, also my freedom. Orale pues I'm up and through.

Alejandra

The Beat Within: If you write about these things, maybe in a journal, or in pieces to the Beat you might get clearer in your head about how you think and feel about them—and they might not be so troubling in your life, or in that moment.

If I Was My Parent

If I were my parent I wouldn't have changed nothing that they did because I don't think they did anything wrong. It's my own fault that I'm here. I live with my dad and my step-mom and one of my little brothers.

Now, my real mom is a whole nother story. If I were my real mom, I wouldn't have been as irresponsible. I would have stepped up and made my kids life as easy as possible. My mom didn't really give my older siblings a chance to live a good childhood. She provided what she could for them, but it wasn't the best that she could have done. She wasn't strict enough. I'm not finna tell ya to much, but that's that...

-Rob

From The Beat: How is your relationship with your Dad and step-mom? You can choose to strengthen that relationship helping all of you and your brother. It's hard to understand all the things that go into the choices people make, like with your mother. You can learn from your family how you would like to build your own family, when it's time.

She Trippin'

What's up Beat? Well Just before I went to sleep last night, I thought about what my Genie was telling me. She was telling me that she wants me to stop hanging around with my friends for my own good, that they bad influence to me.

So I told her like this, "I can't stop hanging around my friends, you trippin', my friends is my family. I can't just stop kicking it with them just cause you don't like them and plus they're not a bad influence to me we all do what we do."

She's mad at me right now but she'll get over it. But yeah, she trippin'.

-Franco
The Beat Within: We are wondering if this Genie is in your imagination, or if she's real. Whichever way, we think it's important you at least consider what she's saying. Did they have anything to do with why you are where you are now? Are you able to explore who you might become when you stick to hanging out with them?

The Crash

I got into a car crash in August, 2008 and I lost my almost like brother, let me start from the beginning.

We were coming from his girl's house on the way to get some gas, I look behind us and this lady started bumping into our bumper and my half brother started to speed and we started to run red lights and she hit the side of my car and we swerved out and the car flipped over and I jumped out the window after the crash and I ran, but I didn't know what to do and a couple minutes later the police found me walking and they called the paramedics to come and pick me up and they took me to Kaiser and kept me in the waiting room for like an hour and a half.

Then my dad came to pick me up, and the next day I called my friend's mom and she told me he died in the car crash and I just thought that if I never would have ran then I could've helped him and I still be thinking about it and that's what happened! R.I.P Jamaal Johnson

-Raysheem
The Beat Within: We are sorry for your loss. It's hard to know what might have happened if you did something different in the past. If you ran it sounds like you were scared, and that makes a certain sense after what all happened. You are not a paramedic so if you had stayed you may or may not have been able to help your friend. You were all in great danger, and you did not cause that. Can you write a private letter to your friend, tell him how you think and feel about him, and that you're sorry about what happened, and say goodbye?

Successfully

Was up wit it Beat? Man I got like fifty seven more days. I can't wait to touch down. When I get out Ima get on the right path get enrolled in day and night school to catch up on credits and finish school successfully, and go to a junior college.

But I aint finna be livin' like a square yadadamean? Ima still be doin' my thang & smackin' out my body & getting dough but I aint finna be involved in anything more than that no more.

I'm finna be celebratin wit my patnas and makin up for every thing I missed out on. My boys miss me & they cant wait for me to get back to the streets & get on our money hype. But until then I'll be doin this wack time but I'll be back to my streets so I aint trippin, Aight then I'm gone.. T's up!

-Demarrea
From The Beat: We're glad to hear about your plans for school. We're not sure everything your talking about is legal, and we hope you think about what your freedom is worth before you get back to your partners. You might need to take a break from the streets to finish school...

Posted

What's up Beat? I'm just posted in New Founds waiting to get out. Thinking bout if Imma go to school every day or go back to the block or I might do both. I don't know but I got four months to think about it.

-Jesse
The Beat Within: Maybe you should write one of those pros and cons lists for yourself. Make a column under "pros" and list all the good things about the block, and then make a list of "cons"—all the bad things. Then do the same for school. If you make the lists honestly they should be a good guide to what will lead you to the future you want.

I Should Have Been More Careful

Before I went to sleep last night I was thinking about what I'm going to do when I get out of here and all the things I did before I came in here.

I was thinking about some stuff I should have been more careful about and I was thinking about my time I got left in here and all the things I'm going to do when I get out with my friends.

Then I woke up and was staring at these walls for another day.

-Gino
The Beat Within: We hope that as you think about what you did, and what you plan to do—that you don't forget how it feels to be locked up, and that you let that knowledge influence your decisions about what you will and will not do in the future.



Sleep Tight

What's good Beat? This is your boy Marky. Imma tell you what I was thinking about before I went to sleep ya dig?

I was thinking but my Brah who was recently killed and the last thing I said to him was to be safe and then an hour later he was gone like in a blink of an eye, that shit ain't cool man. I want my brah back man. Straight up.

-Marky
The Beat Within: We are sorry for your loss. It must be hard to know you just said you wanted him to be safe, and then he wasn't. Important people in our lives are our teachers...what did you learn from him? What would he say to you now if he could? Maybe you could write more about him, tell him how you feel about him and anything else you didn't have time to say.

No Importa El Dinero

¿De qué te sirve el dinero si estas encerrado? ¿De qué sirve el dinero si no puedes comprar tu libertad? ¿De qué sirve el donero si no estas con las personas que más quieres en la vids cosas como tu mama, o papa, tu novia o toda tu famailia?

Estos son los peores momentos de mi vida. ¿De qué sirve el dinero si no te puede dar felicidad?

From The Beat: Tienes razón el dinero no lo puede hacer todo, pero es muy importante para nuestras vida. ¿Si el dinero no lo es todo, que es lo que te da todo a ti?

Money Doesn't Matter

How useful is money if you're locked up? How useful is money if you can't buy your freedom? How useful is money if you're not with the people you love the most like your mother, father, your girl or family?

There are the hardest moments of my life. How useful is money if it can't give you happiness?

-Chele, San Francisco
From The Beat: You're right. Money can't do all this, but it is very important in our lives. If money isn't all for you, what's everything for you?

Lo Que Pensé Anoche

Hey Beat! Es tu homie Lil' Pelon desde esta unidad. Este fue lo que pensé ayer antes de irme a dormir.

Sentado en mi cama anoche pensé sobre mi baby girl. Pensaba en todos los momentos inolvidable que pasamos juntos. Pensé que es lo que voy a hacer cuando salga de aqui. Con unas lágrimas en los ojos, pensaba sobre los momentos felices en mi vida.

Tube un gran pensamiento, limpiandome los ojos dije, "yo sé que puedo y voy a salir adelante."

La neta Beat si se siente gacho haber quedado mal y estar en este lugar extrañando a mi familia, a mis padres y a la niña que ha estado en los momentos más difíciles conmigo, mi novia.

Te extraño Jenny. Mi noche fue triste por pensar en mi vida de afuera.

From The Beat: Entendemos que ha de haber sido un momento triste pensar en lo que realmente quieres. Pero sabes que? También te sirvio para reflexionar y darte cuenta lo que realmente quieres en la vida y lo que realmente necesitas hacer para mejorar tu vida. Nosotros todos aprendemos de nuestros errores y se nota que estas aprendiendo. Sigue pensando positivamente.

What I Thought Last Night

They Beat! This is your homie Lil' Pelon from this unit. This is what I thought last night before sleeping.

Sitting in my bed, I though about my baby girl. I was thinking about all the unforgettable moments we spent together. I thought about what I'm going to do when I get out. With tears on my eyes, I thought about the happiest moment of my life.

I had a great thought, wiping out my tears I said, "I know I can, and I know I'm going to succeed."

The truth Beat is that it is sad ending up bad and being in this place missing my family, my parents and the girl who has been with me in hard moments, my girl.

I miss you Jenny. My night was sad when thinking about my life on the outs.

-Pelon, Santa Clara
From The Beat: We understand it must have been hard to think about what you really love. But you know what? It also helped you to reflect and to realize what are what really matters to you in life, and what you need to do to better your life. We all learn from mistakes, and you are learning from them.

Salgo Pronto

Pues la neta es que no se que hablar pero lo único que quiero escribir en este día tan aburrido es sobre que ya mero salgo. Cuando salga voy a mejorar y estar con mi familia y pasarla a toda madre.

From The Beat: Ya conoces este lugar. Lo demás todo está en ti. Cuidate mucho y recuerda este momento para que no vuelvas a este lugar más. ¿Cuales son tus planes para mantenerte afuera?

I'll Get Out Soon

The truth is that I don't know what to write about, but the only thing I feel like writing this boring day is about me getting out. When I get out, I'm going to try to become better to be with my family and have fun to the fullest.

-No Name, Marin
From The Beat: You know this place now. What comes, it's up to you. Take care of yourself out there and remember this moment, so you won't come back. What are your plans to stay out?

Lo Que Cambiaría

Yo cambiaría mi forma de ser, y pensaría mejorar las cosas. Trataría de no hacer sufrir a mis seres queridos como a la mujer que siempre me ayudó tanto en esta vida, y alguien que siempre estubo a mi lado. Me porte mal. Quisiera volver atras para cambiar todo lo que hice. Quiero ser alguien diferente y ser la persona que ella siempre ha soñado.

From The Beat: ¿Entonces que esperas para cambiar a esa persona que realmente quieres ser? Nadie te está deteniendo. Tienes el derecho de ser diferente y guiar tu vida otro camino.

What I Would Change

I would change my way of behaving, and think about things better. I would try not to hurt my loved ones like the woman who always me help me in my life, who has always been there for me. I did this person wrong. I wish I could turn back time to change everything I did. I want to be someone different and be the person she has always dreamed of.

-No Name, San Francisco
From The Beat: So, what are you waiting for to be the person you want to be? Nobody is holding you back. You have the right to be different and guide your life to another road.

Cuando Salga

Espero cuando salga irme a casa con mi familia porque los extraños mucho. Espero que salga muy pronto porque los extraños. Sí, cometí un error y espero que me perdonen porque los quiero mucho y nunca me olvido de ellos.

From The Beat: Esperamos que aprendas de tu error y que nunca más vuelvas a este lugar. Si los quiere, demuéstralo estando con acciones y no solo con unas líneas de escrituras.

When I Get Out

I hope when I get out to go back home with my family because I miss them so much. I hope to get out soon because I miss them. If I committed a mistake, I hope they forgive me because I am very sorry and I never forget about them.

-Ulises
From The Beat: We hope you learn from your mistakes and never come back to this place. If you really love your people, show it them with actions not just a few lines of writing.

Soledad

Aveces quiero estar solo
Que no me chinge la gente
Soy humano y traigo pedos en la mente
Cualquier cosa, persona o razón
Me puede hacer pensar que porque ando de carbon
La mayoría de personas no me entienden
Entre más les explico, no me comprenden
Cada quien por su lado y yo por el mío
Me vale madre si piensas que soy frío
Nadie en este mundo es perfecto
Y soy un ejemplo y lo digo bien honesto
Todas las persoans que he hecho mal
Me arrepiento y no me quiero recordar
Pero quien cambiarme como soy
Nomás me sacan de onda y hoy les voy
Y por eso mismo me gusta andar solo
Luego me conte yo solo esto
Hola soledad
No me extraña tu presencia
Casi siempre estas conmigo
Te saludo un viejo amigo
Que te encuentre uno más
De un momento a otro
Suceden tantas cosas
Unas buenas y unas menos cariñosas
Muy profundo dentro de mi ser
Camino solo con un triste amanecer
Pero bueno fuera pederme para siempre
Y nunca dar la cara entre la gente
Pero que cobarde fuera,
Si eso yo lo hiciera
Se que estas cosas no la aguanta cualquier
Aveces briago,
creo me pierdo entre los tragos
como so me valiera todo
Rolando dado mas tranquilo
Compa aguanta tantito
Tengo lo que debo
Pero quiero otro poquito
Aveces sueño con mis compass y mujeres
Aveces sueño que abandono mis deberes
Aveces simplemente sueño
Que me maldicen
Y aveces sueño que el mundo me contradice
“Hola soledad
No me extrañaría tu presencia
Casi siempre estas conmigo
Te saluda un viejo amigo
Que te encuentres uno más”
Aquí en mi mundo, comparo con mi sombra
Este compa siempre me acompaña sin bronca
Aveces juntos compartimos aventuras
Por viejos amigos de confianza sin duda
Pero adelante las cosas siempre cambian
También me acuerdo con la jura
Ya me traían
Y ahora de nuevo
Bienvenida soledad
Sólo tú conoces mi sentido de verdad
Como quisiera que me comprendan un poco
Y no me juzguen de loco
La neta sit e me acercas y no te pelo
Y te trato como hielo
guacha ocupo que me dejen solitario un momento
mientras yo me contemplo
dejame, con mi mente compartir
yo solo y me ponga a decir esto
hola soledad
no me extraña tu presencia
casi siempre estas conmigo
te saluda un viejo amigo
que te encuentres uno más.

From The Beat: Se nota de volada que la soledad te está atancando. Lo bueno es que existe la expresión la cual te ayudara a sentirte escuchado y comprendido. Nosotros te entendemos y queremos que sepas que hay momentos en la vida en la cuales pensamos que estamos solo, pero no es así. Siempre hay alguien que te tenga en mente, y que desee lo mejor para tu vida. Lo único que tienes que hacer es abrir tus ojos y aceptar la ayuda de las personas que quieren lo mejor para ti. Tienes un gran talento como escritor. Con escritura puedes hacer muchas cosas maravillosas, como esta expresión.

Loneliness

Sometimes I want to be alone
Not have people to bother me
I am a human and I have problems in my mind
Anything, people, or reasons
Can make me think why I'm making trouble
The majority of people don't understand me
The more I explain it to them, they can't comprehend
They're on their own and I'm on my own
I don't give a damn if they think I'm cold
Nobody in this world is perfect
And I am an example and I say this very honestly
All the people I've done wrong
I regret it and I don't want to think about it
But who can change the way I am
They just get me mad and I turn around
And for that reason, I like to be by my own
Later I say this to myself
“Hi loneliness
your presence doesn't surprise me
you're always with me
I salute you, my old friend
I hope you find another one”
From one moment to another one
Things happens
A few good and a few less welcome
Very deep inside my being
I walk alone with a sad morning
But, it would be good to get lost forever
And never show my face among the people
But it would make me a coward
If I were to do that
I know these things can be handle by anyone
Sometimes drunk
I think I'll get lost in between drinks
as if I didn't care about anything
rolling dices very carefully
friend, hold on a minute
I have what I owe
But I want a little more
Sometimes I dream with my friends and women
Sometimes I dream that I abandon my responsibilities
Sometimes I just have simple dream
That people curse me
And sometimes I dream that the whole world contradict me
“Hi loneliness
your presence doesn't surprise me
you're always with me
I salute you, my old friend
I hope you find another one”
Here, in this world, I compare it with my shadow
This friend is always with me without any trouble
Sometimes we share adventures together
We are old friends with trust without any doubts
But go on, things always change
I also remember the cops
They were on my tail
And once again
Welcome loneliness
You know my truth sense of truth
How much I wish you can understand me a little bit
And not judge me as a crazy
The truth is that if you get near me, I might ignore you
And treat you like ice
Be careful I need you to leave me alone for a moment
While I contemplate myself
Let me share with my mind
Just by myself, and say this
“Hi loneliness
your presence doesn't surprise me
you're always with me
I salute you, my old friend
I hope you find another one”

-Lavelle, San Francisco
From The Beat: It's very obvious how loneliness is attaching the best side of you. The good thing about this is that self-expression helps you to be heard and understood. We understand you and we want you to know that there are times in life when we might think that we are alone in this world, but it's not like that. There is always someone out there thinking about you and wishing you the best to your life. The only thing you need to do is to open up eyes widely and accept the help of those who want the best for you. You have a great talent in expressing your ideas, and thoughts. With writing, you can go very far if you learn how to use it, like you've done it with this expression.

Por Un Error

¿Que ondas? Otra vez aquí contándoles de la vida que he pasado en las calles. Con el dinero compramos muchas cosas, pero nunca vamos a comprar lo que en la casa nos espera. Por ejemplo, la vida de nuestros padres que día a día se van acabando, y los coraje que le hacemos pasar. Amenos con el dinero puedo comprpar mi felicidad, voy a comprar el boleto de avión parairme a Mexico y reunirme con mi mama que llebo unos meses sin verla a ella ni a mis dos hermanos.

Espero con ancias el día 29 de Marzo parairme. Quisiera que mi novia Maria que perdi por venirme a supuestamente hacer dinero aquí en los Estados Unidos, me espere. La perdi porque miren donde estoy encerrado pagando un delito por andar con los amigos hechando desmadre.

Ojalá que cuando regrese no esté casada. Con ella, llebaba mucho tiempo. Tubimos unos años felices que pase a su lado.

Bueno, un consejo les doy a todos que estamos encerrado. Aquí no cometan la misma pendejada que yo hice porque cuando se arrepienten es demaciado tarde.

From The Beat: Esperamos que esta nueva jira a tu país, te de la felicidad que te mereces. Recuerda y manten en mente los errores que cometistes aquí para que no los vuelvas a cometer. Cuida a tu familia y busca la forma como ser una persona mejor y dar un buen ejemplo. Gracias por tus consejos y espero que muchos aprendan de tu error y de tu consejo.

For A Mistake

What's up? Here I am once again sharing something about the life I've spent on the streets. With money we can buy many things, but we can't buy the things that is waiting for us at home. For example, the lives of our parents that day by day is getting to their end, or the pain we cause. But, with money I am going to buy my happiness because I am going to buy my airplane ticket back to Mexico to be reunited with my mother and brothers who I haven't seen for months.

I'm waiting desperately to leave on March 29th. I wish my girl Mario, who I lost over making money in the US, wait for me. I lost her for the place where I am right now paying off for a crime I committed with my friends. I hope her not to be married by the time I get back. With her, I spent a lot of time. We spend a few years happy with her. Well,

Well, I advice you all who are locked up, not to make the same mistake I did because it would be too late by the time you get to regret it.

-Chino, Santa Clara
From The Beat: We hope going back to your country bring the happiness you deserve to your life. Always keep in mind all the mistakes you committed here, so you won't make them again. Take care of your family and find the way to be a better person to set a good example to your brothers. Thank you for your advice and we hope many learn from your mistake and advice.

If I am here is because I made it to be like this and not because of my mother who has always been there for me.

Si Fuera Mis Propios Padres

Hey, que ondas Beat! Pues voy a escribir sobre si fuera mis padres. Si yo fuera mis padres, yo no cambiaría nada porque mis padres siempre me han enseñado a ser respetoso y a tener responsabilidades por mis acciones.

Si estoy aquí es por mi culpa y no por la de mi madre que es la que siemrpe ha estado ahí por mí. Le estoy agradecido. Es todo por ahora. A todos los homies que estan adentro, no se aguiten, hablara tiempo mejores.

From The Beat: Que bien que tengas persona que realmente haya y estan siempre a tu lado. Creemos que ya es hora que busques la manera como empezar a darle algo de lo que se merece. No crees?

If I Were My Own Parents

Hey, Beat what's up? I am going to write about if I were my own parents. If I were my own parents, I wouldn't change anything because my parents have always taught me to be respectful and to face responsibilities of my actions.

If I am here is because I made it to be like this and not because of my mother who has always been there for me. I am very thankful to her. This is all for now. To all in here, don't get down. There will be better time for us.

-Grumpy, Santa Clara
From The Beat: It's good to know that you have people who are there and will always be there for you. We believe that is it time for you find a way to start giving back to this person some appreciation. Don't you think so?

Antes De Dormirme Anoche

Q-onda raza? Yo les voy a contar a todas las morritas que estuve pensando cuando me fui a dormir ayer. Se me vino un recuerdo. Fue cuanto me torcieron. Estuve pensando en mi familia y también en mi hermano en como estaran. Deben de estar triste. Ha pasado un tiempo que uno no piensa en todas las cosas que han pasado allá afuera.

Por eso cuando vienene a visitarme, les digo que no se preocupen porque muy pronto voy a salir. Ahora mi madre ya no está triste que cuando caí aquí.

Tambien pienso en la muchacha que deje afuera. Todos los días pienso en ella, pero ni modo. Yo sé que no se va a portar bien porque yo se como son toda. Trucha a todos los homies.

From The Beat: Claro que deben estar triste. ¿Qué esperas? Ellos son tu familia y te quieren. Esperamo que hagas lo posible por hacer todo bien para tu bien y el de tu familia. Recuerda que no TODAS las mujeres son las mismas. ¿O vas a decir que todos los hombres son los mismos?

Before I Went To Sleep

What's up people? I want to share all the girls what I was thinking yesterday before I went to sleep. A memory came to me. It was about when I got locked up. I was thinking about my family and how my brother might be doing. They might be sad. It's been a long time that I haven't thought about the things that have happened on the outs.

When they come to visit me, I tell them not to worry because I'll get out pretty soon. Now, my mother is not as sad as before when I got here.

I also think about the girl I left on the outs. I think about her everyday, but what now. I know she's not going to behave well because I know who all girls are. Be careful.

-Paco, Santa Clara
From The Beat: Of course, they might feel sad. What do you expect? They are your family and they care for you. We hope you do your best to behave better and go back to where you belong. One more thing, not ALL girls are the same. Or would you say that all men are the same?

Stupid

Stupid is as stupid does,
The way I am, the way I was.
Though nothing good will stay
God grace is here today.

A Free Lunch

Been a decade since I've thrown a punch
Now, I'm tossing baloney in my lunch
What's next? I'll have to wait and see
In prison, only the lunches are free.

Ad-Seg

Both feet in my mouth
Don't leave me a leg
Unshaven, uncouth
I'm back in Ad-Seg.
A 115 pending
For defending a friend -
Who knows how it'll end?

My Path

I took the road less traveled by,
Can't say it made the difference.
Excitement faded to a sigh,
As I confessed my ignorance.

Next time I run across a path,
I'll pray for guidance, and to bless
The many forks upon the path,
To keep me from another mess.

Look who is back! Our next writer is a primetime writer for our publication, who has turned in pieces week in and week out, especially during our 2008 season. Unfortunately, due to personal matters, he has decided not to write for a while. He submitted this entry a couple months of ago and we didn't publish it because we wanted to print it in the Special Issue BWO's, but since it's not coming out for another few weeks we decided to put Mikhail's last piece to us in here. Sending us his thoughts from Ad. Seg. in Corcoran State Prison, in Corcoran, California, we would like to welcome back Mikhail Markhasev one last time until our friend decides it's time to enlighten us with his writings once again. We send you our love and respect of friend!

Dear BWO Readers

Well as it says in the Bible, "To everything there is a reason, and a time for every purpose under the Heaven". (Eccl. 3:1). And so, after almost three years of programming in Gen Pop. Unit, I'm back in the hole, writing you from the illustrious Ad-Seg, here at Corky's. What was that Forrest Gump said about life being a box of chocolates?

In any case, once here, "You never know what you're going to get." So, I may be forced to take a brief hiatus from weekly contributions-not due to lack, of time, material, or desire, since in here we get one pen filler every two weeks or so, and family/friend mail comes first.

God disciplines those whom he loves and so it's up to me to receive his discipline with humility and submission, knowing that in every situation and circumstance there is a divine purpose, regardless of whether it is seen or unseen, understood or incomprehensible. Life is a mystery, but God's love is a fact. May he comfort you wherever you are.

Perhaps

Thought I was smooth, trying to teach,
Writing and sharing with all within reach
Then, my endeavors crashed with a screech -
Perhaps I need to practice what I preach.

WANDA PRESSEY

Our next writer is a very special guest that goes by the aka of Casper, who was introduced by veteran Beat writer, Herbert Schweigert. Casper is a woman that's writing to us all the way from Huron Valley Complex in Ypsilanti, Michigan. She's a first time writer with a lot of feelings to get off her chest. So give Casper a warm welcome, and the wave of emotions that she drowns us in!

Acknowledge my pain, it is so real and ever present
I am overwhelmed with sad and conflicting thoughts

Lend me your hope for a while
A time will come when I will heal
And I will share my renewal
Hope and love with others.

Dreams Are Forever
Dreams are forever
They never do die
Some make people happy
Some make people cry
But...
Dreams are forever
They never do die.

Lend Me

Lend me your hope for a while
I seem to have mislaid mine
Lost and hopeless feelings accompany me daily
Pain and confusion are my companions
I know not where to turn
Looking ahead to future times does not bring forth images
of renewed hope
I see troubled times, pain-filled days and more tragedy

Lend me your hope for awhile
I seem to have mislaid mine
Hold my hand and hug me
Listen to all my ramblings
Recovery seems so far distant
The road to healing seems like a long and lonely one

Lend me your hope for a while
I seem to have mislaid mine
Stand by me, offer me your presence, your heart and your
love

Cool

It wouldn't be me if I didn't remind each of you that there are three kinds of people; people who make it happen, people who watch it happen, and people that things happen to. What kind of person are you?

It's 2009 and, as they say, out with the old and in with the new. What old are you getting rid of and what new are you taking with you? Your past has passed. You lived it, and I hope you learned from it. Three hundred sixty-five days of countless new experiences, new conversations, new revelations, and new inspirations.

Just in case you didn't know, Jeezy made it clear: Our president is Black, not of Black America but of the United States of America. Queen Latifah reminded us to put "ladies first," and now, in 2009, Michelle Obama is our first lady, carrying with her the soul of Mary J. Blige and the grace and spirit of Beyonce Knowles. Lil' Wayne showed us how to still sell "Milli," not just by being a rapper but by making rap his life. T.I. encouraged you to "Live Your Life," not someone else's life, by taking responsibility for your mistakes and evolving into a better man and a public servant. Will Smith inspired us all to say "I Am A Legend" and pushed us all to focus on our own "Pursuit of Happiness." Puff said, "I am king," therefore I can do anything; I am what I believe myself to be." And Russell Simmons continues to remind us to relax our minds and let our consciousness be free. Jay-Z reminded us that Rosa Parks sat so Martin Luther King, Jr. could march. King marched so that Barack Obama could run. Obama ran so we all can fly. So spread your wings and fly because this year there can be no more excuses. Obama's road to the White House embodied the spirit of hip-hop. He encouraged change when some said things were unchangeable. He believed when most said, "You are unbelievable." He achieved when everyone said it was unachievable. We must all step up, step out on faith, find our will and make it happen. President Obama's thrill of victory has inspired me to encourage "The New Cool."

The New Cool is to be presidential; walk presidential, talk presidential, and act presidential. No matter what you do, where you are in your life, through crisis, frustration, aggravation, good, bad, or sad times, carry yourself presidential. Dare to dream the big dream and work hard to be an agent of change.

In honor of Black History Month, please celebrate and pray for those who made history before us, and continue to encourage and inspire young America to make their own history after us. The New Cool embodies faith, education, wealth, and legacy. I will always encourage you to be you, with one condition. Adopt The New Cool. Be presidential.

Our next writer is no stranger to our publication as he constantly contributes great poems, and pieces of writings filled with real game and knowledge. Shawn is a very intelligent man, but wasn't always like that because he let his ignorance get the best of him. Now he's a more humble dude that is dedicated to let all you readers know everything he has learned over the past couple decades of being locked down in Union Correctional Institution in Raiford, Florida.

The Beat Within

I have had times in my life when just getting out of bed in the morning was a struggle. I was so depressed. At those times, I needed something to read, to keep me going, to remind me just how important life is--to tell me that there is hope.

Holding and reading The Beat gave me the external source I needed to remind me of the true meaning of who I am and who I can become. I, like many other Beat readers, use The Beat Within as a source for survival. When I wake up in the morning, and life just seems unbearable, I open the pages of The Beat and realize that I am really not alone. When I seem to be slipping off the end of my rope of life, having The Beat to read, gives me a knot at the end of the rope to securely hang on to.

Your writings and inspiration lift me up. I can use your words as a step stool to an internal window to the wisdom of being all I can be. I can begin again to see the kids in the world. The Beat gets me out of the rough spots when I cannot see the way. If this is true for me, it is true for many more.

Loving Loving you is not a matter Of having the same thoughts
Or being like you
Loving you is letting you be you, And letting that
expression of you Harmonize with the pattern of me As
light and shadow
Night and day
Left and right
In their own way Need each other for expression
So loving you can be the complement of our diversity
That is what it means to love
Happy Valentine's Day.

BABY D

Our next writer is originally from Detroit Michigan, but is residing in Duval Vocational Institution in Tracy California. He delivers us a sad but true poem about what drugs can do to you and how they can take control and ruin your life. It's a sad story that we hear many times, as Baby D describes the effects of what can happen when you're using a very addictive and dangerous drug that goes by the name of "Meth." So hear Baby D out as he pours his confessions on paper, and lets you know his true inner feelings.

With nothing to show but tracks on my arm
And being sucked up it hurts bad
With my wife, family that turned against me cause of my
drug use
It's got me tore up inside and on the outside
It shows to the fullest in my eyes
Meth/crystal is the worst drug yet
Well I'll end my lil' poem or the feelings I wrote down on
paper.

Meth

Meth the drug we all adore
The drug we stick in our veins
The one we like to call wife
At this point in time she's the one that's got me in this
place
The one I only got at my time
She made me throw my family away, lie, cheat, steal
But why most of all, we support her will
She's our best friend when really she ain't at all
She drains us of everything we got
Family, friends, money, wife, and kids
She puts us in prison
When we get this precious thing in our system
The devil comes out
Now I look back with me being 23 years old

Guantanamo? What About Texas?

Considering all the recent uproar surrounding the extremely harsh conditions that exist at the illegal prison that the Bush Administration has set up in Guantanamo.

As a prisoner who has been held in a Texas prison for over a decade, the last two in solitary confinement, I'm puzzled by the lack of uproar about this illegal prison system that former President Bush was very instrumental in crafting as governor of Texas prior to being elected to the President of the United States; a prison system that thrives off torture, violent abuse, sexual humiliation and death. One that's not accountable and that is beyond the rule of law.

Unlike Guantanamo, this prison is not located on some foreign soil and the mass majority of the prisoners held here are American citizens. This prison is the Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ), whose false mission statement says, "The mission of TDCJ is to provide public safety, promote positive change in offensive behavior, reintegrate offenders into society and assist victims of crime."

After reading this article, it's my hope that you would understand what any person who has had any true contact with TDCJ understands and that is, TDCJ's mission is not designed to correct but to DESTROY.

Like Guantanamo, TDCJ is a virtual death camp that should have every civil society, journalists, clergy, or anyone else who's concerned with social justice, in an uproar, demanding that TDCJ be shut down immediately.

Most people think of American prisons in light of what they view on TV, in popular movies and series like Oz, where inmates are allowed to roam freely, attend educational classes, watch TV, lift weights and play basketball; where every inmate shares a cell with one of his close buddies, have the luxuries of huge boom boxes, unlimited food and medical care and pleasant contact visits with family members on the weekend at a picnic table.

Some people I've had the pleasure to correspond with are even under the false illusion that inmates have access to the Internet, telephones, and are paid for their labor on a prison job. Well, while this may be true in some prison systems in the United States, it's not so in Texas. None of the aforementioned things are conducive to TDCJ's mission--to DESTROY.

When one first enters into a TDCJ prison, you instantly know you have entered into a system that has destructive principles at its core. You are ordered to strip nude in front of various officers and inmates, include female officers and female personnel from the medical and classification department. You are forced to endure this sexual humiliation, while these officers yell all types of obscenities and degrading vulgarity into your ear, while the spectators who are watching all laugh and entertain themselves at your degradation.

You are then assigned a cell where you will be housed with an unknown stranger. TDCJ does not issue out deodorant, toothpaste, hair grease, or shower shoes to anyone, not even indigent inmates.

If you are fortunate to have come to TDCJ with money, you would be permitted a trip to the commissary to buy these items after 30 days. It's all by design, that you suffer some social alienation by having to go 30 days without hygiene items, in a prison system that has no central heat or A/C in the hot Texas temperatures.

This week, Isma'il Rahman brings more than enough valid points and gives us reasons why we (the public), should be more aware of what's going on inside those walls. And what actually goes on in prison is a mystery to a lot of us, unless you've been there, but some of us have some false misconceptions about prison. So Isma'il is setting all the facts straight and gives it to us raw. Writing to us from Michael's Unit in Tennessee Colony, in Texas, Isma'il gives the gut down on what goes on inside!

During this time, you will undergo various evaluations to determine what job qualifications you possess to best serve TDCJ and their various industries (TDCJ makes virtually everything that it takes to build and operate prisons, including raising its own livestock and growing its own crops).

Once it's determined what prison you would be sent to (TDCJ has 130 different prisons), you will be placed on a bus in the middle of the night and sent to a prison that can be as far away from your loved ones and hometown as 600 miles. Once at this prison, you will once again be assigned to a cell with a total stranger. You will be instantly assigned a job that you are expected to work with loyalty for absolutely NO pay.

Depending on what type of crime you were convicted of, you could receive good time credits, but even if you qualify to receive them, the parole board is not compelled to accept them and grant you early release. So it's absolutely safe to say that you are working for no pay--slave labor. These jobs range from a cellblock janitor to a field worker (think chain gang).

There are two TVs in the dayroom area, but the officers have control over the stations. The mass majority of fights that occur in TDCJ is over the TV that's instigated by the guards utilizing the TV as a leverage to pit inmates against one another. The TV stations are all local; depending on what prison you're in, there may be as many as seven different channels to select from, or as few as three.

After working for 10-12 hours on a job, most inmates are too tired to watch TV. Some may brave the strip searches that are mandated to go out to the recreation yard for an hour and the strip search coming in, but even that's rare.

There's no personal TV for your cell; you are permitted to purchase an off-brand clock radio that requires headphones, but again, deep in these woods where TDCJ prisons are located, you'll be lucky to pick up a radio signal. Since TDCJ doesn't pay you for work, indigent inmates are not allowed this luxury. It's even against the rules for one inmate to purchase a radio, or toothpaste for that matter, for an indigent inmate. If caught by the guards, you will be written a disciplinary case and placed in solitary confinement.

Indigent inmates are allowed to process 5 personal letters a week through the unit's law library, but these charges are always deducted from your inmate trust fund account. In the case you receive some money from a loved one, TDCJ will deduct the amount you owe from the correspondence instantly. The same goes for medical services. TDCJ charges \$3 for all medical visits. The amount is deducted from your trust fund that is established when loved ones send you money. If you are indigent, this \$3 fee will just build up until you're released on parole and it will be added to your parole fees.

The visitation rules are horrible. TDCJ permits inmates to have one to two hour visits on Saturday or Sunday. Your visitors are subjected to all types of senseless searches and must be approved on your visitation list, which can contain

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up to 10 people. You're permitted to change this list once every 6 months. There are no conjugal visits, and the only contact visits allowed are with immediate family members. No matter how clean your discipline record is, if you don't have any immediate family members, NO contact visits!!

The food in the dining hall is horrible. Despite raising their own livestock, TDCJ sells these livestock on the open market. At the processing plants that are operated by free inmate labor, TDCJ takes certain scraps from their cattle and pigs, mix it with a soybean product and serve it in the dining hall. Most of the meat you get looks and smells like Spam-- no steaks, no ham, no chicken breast. You work 10 hours a day for free raising and processing livestock that you will never eat.

The veggies are disgusting and often inedible. There is no psychiatric assistance, no substance abuse counseling, no quality educational program, and no family counseling; nothing to promote positive change or to help an inmate to successfully reintegrate back into society. The majority of inmates leave here untrained, untreated, poorer and more disenfranchised than when they came in.

At any time a guard will come into your cell and throw all your personal property (family letters, photos, etc.) around just to torture you, to demoralize you. If you try to speak up for yourself, it's possible you will be sprayed with tear gas, slammed to the floor, written a bogus disciplinary case and tossed into solitary confinement. At times these placements in solitary confinement can be indefinite. I've been here for two years without a disciplinary case. I'm deemed a threat to the security of the prison institution because I demand to be treated with dignity and respect, like a human being. Officers are trained that we are subhuman,

criminals that have given up the rights to be treated like humans. Officers believe it's their moral obligation to oppress inmates.

In solitary, you are confined to your cell 23 hours a day. You get one hour for recreation in a small cage located directly in front of your cell. There's no human contact except with the officers. The prolonged isolation causes psychosis and many people lose their minds. The officers beat on the cells at all hours of the night to cause sleep deprivation. Daily it's like an experiment to see how much an inmate can take before they completely lose their sanity. The situation is hopeless, and many inmates end up committing suicide. It's all about destruction.

If you look at all the executions Texas (TDCJ) carries out yearly, you can believe that the same people who are responsible for creating this death are the same who create the destruction (death) I've outlined in this article. It's worst than Guantanamo. We should demand more from those who are charged with issuing out punishment and promoting positive behavior.

How is TDCJ providing public safety when the product they return back into our communities is more damaged than they were when they left? With the highest suicide rate of any prison system in the country, and the highest rates of executions, why isn't there an uproar to shut this place down? How is this allowed to operate under this false mission statement?

The public is sometimes quick to call for a tougher stance on crime but slower to understand the consequences of such a stance. Texas prisons are criminal. Let's get tough like we are with Guantanamo.

LIL' BRODY

As we introduce to you our next writer we would just like to point out that our boy, Lil' Brody, isn't trying to glorify the gangbang life, he's sending us a message and trying to find a way of eluding his current situation. Writing to us from a Correctional Facility in Soledad, CA, Lil' Brody talks about the game from a different aspect - from the inside.

A Lil' Something

It's been a while since I've thought bout it, but this life isn't easy. I've been both the victim and perpetrator of gang violence and random crimes. If you knock at death door I might be the one to answer. My lifestyle may be harsh and unforgiving but I love it too much to let it go. I can't stop this life and wont stop my ways. There's a better way to live and though I've tried to grasp it, it remains ever elusive. If I never learn another thing until the day I die I will survive and I will prosper.

I am a product of my environment and circumstances. These circumstances have molded me and made me become a soldado (soldier) for the sight of my survival. If I ever said to you that I would change it would be impossible for me to hide my true thoughts. You would dislike the discrimination in my eyes. However if I told you that I may cause you harm you would be well advised to watch your back. I keep it real and come straight from the teaching of the gang and the goals of my cause. I wish harm upon my enemies and will do all within my reach to fulfill this wish. I expect the same in return so out of necessity I am a careful person to the point of paranoia. I have no reason to give regard to other people's lives or feelings. If you are not one of my loved ones you are nothing to me. Survival of the fittest is the oldest and trusted law that I know. It is the only law that I choose to follow.

My goal in is to eliminate all those who oppose the

strength and unity of my loved ones and myself by any means and to make all other parties bow down in respect. This is the way that I live my life, with no other purpose but to come out on top and come up off others. It is the warrior's way. Because of this I will survive and prosper in any aspect of the game that I may choose to exploit. This life is unlivd and will remain that way. I have seen and inflicted wounds from bullets, blades from other warriors. I have seen the light of life leave the eyes of more than one man in my life.

There is only one way I will ever leave this game is death. The only pitfall to this life is prison. I am prepared for this. It's nothing. I was born into this life and love the way it's treated me. I've allowed it to take advantage of me and turn me out. I will not stop. Could you live this life I lead and not fall under the pressure? I can. Can you deal with the possibility of a good life gone to waste or gone for nothing? If it's your own? I can. Are you prepared for this? I am. The life of a gangster is all I know and I am gone live it to the fullest. Death is embraced and change is the only hope.

The whole criminal way of life is a self-destruct button and all the shot-callers at the top are feeding on your life. “Misery loves company.” That’s a fact. Don’t be a follower. Don’t let the ones who life is over end yours.

read the rest of Sam Mullane's BWO piece on page 67

